

Grassroots Campaigner

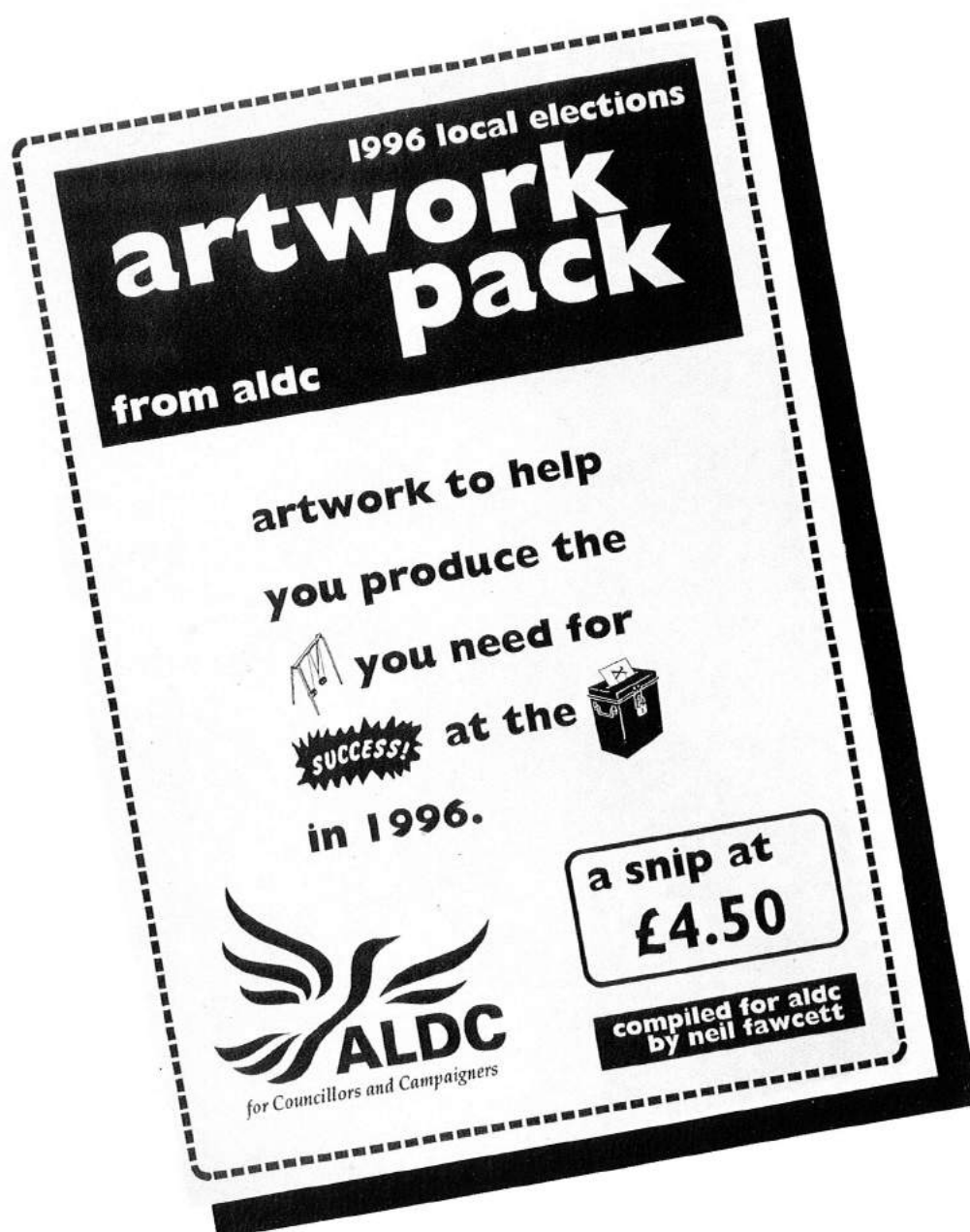
*For all Silver and Gold members of ALDC, incorporating:
Members Bulletin, Grapevine, Campaigner and Town & Parish News*

Inside:

- **ALDC Autumn Conference report**
 - **How We Won a seat from the Tories in Oxfordshire** (the first LD gain from Con for five months)
 - **The Wedding of the year?**
 - **Focus on groups in control**
 - **A-Z of plain English**
 - **Chard Market Survey**
 - **Campaigning on rail & education in Scotland**
 - **Letter to Santa**
 - **Council Support Officer goes international?**
-

The 1995 Local Election Artwork Kit

(also available on disk PM4)



**All you will need to run a successful
election campaign this May**

Contents

Recruit a friend	2	Goodbye Gobbledegook	30
Tax Cuts and Chickens Run	3	Chard Town Council -	
Winning Banbury Easington	5	Market Survey	32
Who's Who?	12	Wedding of the year?	34
Why do they vote for Us	14	Regenerated and Renewed	35
Election Campaigns -		Political Ban May Be Dropped	37
What Works Wins	16	Beyond Public Question Time	37
Tackling Crime	19	Letter to Santa	38
Lib Dems take chairs	19	What are Paperless Candidates?	39
Scottish Rail Campaign	20	Tovil PC Plans Ahead	41
Somerset Rail Campaign	21	News from Birchcliffe	42
Have your say in Brentwood	24	Getting Ready for the G.E.	42
Opening up the Council in Pendle	24	A Budget for Growth	42
Balancing the books in Harrogate	25	Diary Dates - put them in now!	42
A Model Travellers' Site	25	It's All Silver and Gold from Jan.	42
Leading in West Cornwall	26	News from around the councils	43
Working in Partnership	26	New Information Officer	43
Go Getting in St Albans	27	News from the Unitaries	44
At Your Leisure	28	Merry Xmas and Season's	
Simply the Best!	28	Greetings to all our members	44
There's more than one way to do it!	28	Cllr Warning:	44
Have You Missed The Money?	30		

Acknowledgements

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Grassroots Campaigner: Vol I, Issue I, December 1995

MAKE 1996 THE YEAR IN WHICH YOU BRING THE TRAINING OF ALL YOUR COUNCILLORS AND ACTIVISTS UP TO DATE

ALDC training is available to meet all of your needs

**New Unitary authorities
Setting priorities, making strategies
for the council group
Targeting
Canvassing
Interpreting canvass information
Polling day organisation**

Focus on FOCUS

**Grassroots campaigning
Effective chairing in the council
Campaign strategy
Election organisation and planning
Key skills training days**

Would you like ALDC to organise a training day to meet the specific requirements of your region, council group or local party? Are you an individual councillor or activist who would like to join one of our ready made training courses?

If so, then please contact

**Paul Burstow (Tel: 0181-643-8775), Campaigns and Training Officer or
Graham Rix (Tel: 01491-836621), Volunteer Coordinator for further information.**

Recruit a friend

With this mailing you should find a membership form. Please **DO NOT** just 'bin it', but **DO** pass it on to a colleague. That might be your fellow ward councillor, next May's prospective candidate, your local party chair, your council group leader or one of your leading activists you are 'bringing on'.

I am sure with a little thought you could add many more potential members to the list above, and you will be surprised - when you ask, who is or is not a member of ALDC.

**Lets start 1996 with another
increase in our membership - it will
only take five minutes on YOUR
part and YOU know it makes sense.**

Volunteers Galore

Judging by our postbag few members could have failed to notice the recent drive by ALDC to recruit new volunteer political advisers, trainers and specialist advisers.

The response has greatly exceeded our expectations and we should like to thank everyone who has offered their services. Please accept our apologies if you have not yet heard from us. We are steadily working through the considerable amount of work generated by the large response and will be in touch with everyone in due course.

Notwithstanding the large response we are still open to further applications so do please keep those forms coming in.

Comment

Tax Cuts and Chickens Run

Welcome to ALDC's new Grassroots Campaigner. It comes after almost nine months of planning and preparations -interrupted by the biggest set of local elections we've ever faced, and the occasional successful Parliamentary by-election. This edition is a 'pilot', and we'd very much like to hear your views on every aspect of it.

Our new launch comes at the start of a fascinating political year. In twelve months time the Tories' two-pronged election strategy of "Tax Cuts and Chickens Run" will have come to an abrupt halt, unless, that is, they slither into the final cul de sac of 1997 before hitting the buffers. You know they're beat, they know they are beat. The only question remaining is, who exactly will beat them?

Last month they brought us their Budget, with goodies now, and a promise of even more goodies in next November's Budget. Then early next Autumn they'd like to say to the British electorate "we gave you the first helping in 1995, now we're going to have an election to see if you really want the second helping."

Too cynical? November's publication of the British Survey of Attitudes highlighted the news that 73% of the voters think that 'Governments don't put the needs of the nation above the interests of their party'. That is a figure that has got steadily higher in the last ten years. We are all cynics now, voters and politicians alike.

No Change, No Chance

Tory expediency isn't just in the tax cuts, it is also in all those Tory MPs who are retiring, or running away

from their voters to allegedly 'safer' seats. The exodus has been dubbed 'The Chicken Run' by the media. Certainly the Tory chickens are running. They are also flapping rather a lot, too. Quietened down for a couple of months by the taste of their own blood in the Leadership Contest (No Change, No Chance was the loser's slogan. Amen to that!) the feathers are starting to fly again.

The Tories are in deep trouble, and they know it.

The running will have to stop when the chickens come home to roost.

What About the Liberal Democrats?

Rather boringly, we gained yet more council seats this year. That's gains in 14 years out of 17. We've broken all records, and with over 5,000 councillors, overtook the Tories in Scotland in April, and then overtook them in Wales and England in May. We went on to win a very tough by-election at Littleborough and Saddleworth (that's four gains to us and one each to Labour and the SNP in this Parliament). All our four new MPs are ALDC members, by the way. So there's not much wrong with our electoral progress.

Then we went to Glasgow and had a good Party Conference. Paddy made a brilliant speech. On sleaze, honesty about taxation, and vision, we have outscored the so-called Official Opposition time and again. Meanwhile the media keeps thinking we are about to do something silly, but we keep not doing it. So there's not much wrong with our political message.....

Firing the Bullet Points

Yet with everything going so well, we are still ignored. So what on earth do we have to do to regain our rightful place in the voters' minds as the truly modern party with the policies and the people who can lead Britain into the next century?

To coin a phrase, what do we have to do to 'get our message across'? The Party's "themes" are starting to make an impact with our Focus editors. The slogans are getting stuck on the artwork and beginning to drop through the letterboxes. So far, though, there is only limited singing in the streets. And what about the 'Liberal Democrat Guarantee'? That says "Every vote, every seat we win at the next General Election will be dedicated to these three priorities:-

- **Investing in people**
- **Cleaning up the mess in politics**
- **Building for the long term**

- ◆ **Are you pushing those bullet points?**
- ◆ **Are you clear what we are talking about?**
- ◆ **Are your leaflet deliverers clear?**
- ◆ **And all your 'definites and probables'?**

We believe you. Not.

My Tax Cuts Are Better Than Your Tax Cuts

Meanwhile Labour has got a message across. No-one is quite sure what it is, but for the moment that doesn't matter. They don't even have a slogan, it is a mantra: 'New Labour, New Britain', which roughly translates into "Old Slogans, No Policy". Claiming to have crushed the left, crushed the unions, even crushed the cardboard boxes Labour in Westminster are now promoting policies Mrs. Thatcher didn't dare speak of until after she'd won her first election. The so-called 'Opposition' ignores the case for investment in education, and instead are poised to enter a 'my tax cuts are better than your tax cuts' auction. Labour in the Town

Halls are struggling to keep up. Mostly they have given up, openly admitting that it is absolute nonsense that is pouring out of their Leader's office, but not willing to rock the boat when they are 30% ahead in the polls.

Off The Boil

In the last two months Labour's by-election performance has slackened. Whatever the polls say, they have gone off the boil electorally. Not that they'll be complaining at a regular 45%, even so. As the New Year opens it will be fascinating to see whether those internal critics start to wobble in public... and will voter loyalty survive the realisation that the cuts in their child's school budget, and in home care, and in local road maintenance would be just as deep with Gordon Brown's feeble package as it will be with Ken Clarke's?

"Tax Cuts Mean School Cuts"

As the national debate on the Budget and Tax Cuts rumbles on in the next few months, whilst Liberal Democrats on local councils fight to preserve services, the way is open for a determined and principled Liberal Democrat campaign that links our commitment to honesty about taxation and spending with our commitment to investment in education.

In the next four months Councils up and down Britain will be struggling to preserve basic services. Desperately deep cuts look likely, particularly in schools and educational provision. Why? Because "Tax Cuts mean School Cuts". It is the job of Liberal Democrats, whether PPCs, MPs, councillors, or campaigning activists to hammer home that basic message. The Guarantee and the Three Themes are fine - but what we need now is something more robust, more direct, and more hard-hitting. The Tories have set it up for us, and Labour have stood back for us.

We can get our message across! So All together now: repeat after me:

"Tax Cuts Mean School Cuts".

Winning Banbury Easington

By Neil Fawcett

On Thursday 16th November Liberal Democrat Daphne Nash gained the Banbury Easington County Division from the Tories on a swing of over 20%. The Labour share went down 5.6%.

	1995		1993	
	Vote	%	Vote	%
Lib Dem	782	49.7	563	27.8
Tory	465	29.6	927	45.8
Labour	325	20.7	533	20.7

Political history

Banbury town is not a Lib Dem stronghold. In recent years the Lib Dems have concentrated on winning seats in the rural areas of Cherwell District, with some success, but the price has been declining support in the town itself.

A Conservative resignation in Banbury Easington presented a considerable challenge but also a real opportunity to break into the town.

The ward is the only one with any real history of Lib Dem activity, as the distant second place in 1993 showed. There had been no real work since, however. The two district wards which make up the division have returned Labour councillors in the 1995 district elections, one had no Lib Dem candidate.

We were, therefore, effectively fighting the by-election campaign from third place.

The strategy

Political campaigning in Banbury has always been fairly low key - so the first objective was to come out fighting and give them a campaign the like of which they had never seen before.

We planned to do 3 full ward drops, one on each weekend of the campaign. These would be followed by target letters and a Good Morning in the final week.

We knew that canvassing would be hard work because the evenings would be dark and cold. We de-

cided to daytime canvass, two sessions a day, and to canvass at weekends. We would top up this information with telephone canvassing.

It was also clear that our success could depend upon getting enough help from other Lib Dems. We agreed a weekly mailshot to key activists round the county to encourage help.

We decided to fight a very strong political campaign on our agenda, believing that the campaign would be one by whichever of ourselves and Labour appeared to be the strongest opposition.

We set out to push our policy on spending more on schools and attack both the other parties on this issue. We agreed to run the "Stop The School Cuts" petition throughout the campaign.

Finally we had to establish ourselves as the main challengers. The result last time the County seat was fought was presented as "Liberal Democrats are the clear challengers, Labour trailed in third here last time this seat was fought."

The start of the campaign

The day after our first strategy meeting the Banbury Guardian front page story was that the local hospital, the Horton, was under threat.

The Horton has suffered in recent years with a number of services being cut. Closure could mean patients having to travel to Oxford for treatment.

I took the decision that the "Stop The School Cuts"

FOCUS

on Easington Ward

News and Views from your local Liberal Democrats



Save the Horton

"Once again our local Hospital is under threat because of crazy Conservative health policies," says *Daphne Nash*.

"Banbury Liberal Democrats will fight this threat all the way to the top."

Local Lib Dems launch petition campaign

Daphne Nash and Banbury Liberal Democrats have launched a campaign to end the threat to the future of the Horton Hospital.

"We have launched a petition to the Secretary of State calling for the Government to change their crazy health policies," said Daphne Nash, who has been collecting signatures on the petition.

Lib Dems the Challengers

Lib Dem 2nd Place	Con 1st Place	The result last time
		Labour 3rd Place

At the 1993 County Council elections Liberal Democrat Daphne Nash was the clear challenger to the Conservative. Labour came third.

Lib Dems Back The NHS

Liberal Democrats are campaigning to save our NHS both locally and nationally.

"The Liberal Democrats give a clear commitment to preserve our NHS," says Daphne Nash.

Free eye and dental checks

The Liberal Democrats have promised to bring back free eye and dental check ups when elected. They also say prescription charges should be frozen at their current level.

The Liberal Democrats have said that this will be paid for by raising taxes on tobacco.

Putting patients first

The Liberal Democrats want the National Health Service to give every patient more say. They will put patients' needs before political dogma.

Under the Liberal Democrats patients will:

- have a say in their own care;
- be involved in decision making and setting priorities;
- have a right to complain effectively.

"The Tories said the Health Service was 'safe in their hands'. This latest threat to our local hospital shows that just isn't true."

If you want to help the campaign to get the Government to change their disastrous health policies please sign and return the petition slip straight away.

Save the Horton

To: The Secretary of State for Health

I/We the undersigned urge you to change the Government's health policies which have placed the future of the Horton Hospital, Banbury, under threat.

Name

Address

.....
.....
.....
.....

Return to: Daphne Nash, 22 Brooke Road, Banbury, OX169QX

The first leaflet reported Daphne Nash launching the petition campaign to Save the Horton and started the 'Lib Dem the Challengers' theme

campaign would be relegated to the secondary issue and that the "Save The Horton" Petition would be run instead.

The first Focus was put together. It was an A3 leaflet, folded to A4 size. This was partly for impact and partly because we had plenty to say. The headline on the front page was "Save The Horton" and a petition form was prominent in the bottom corner.

We also produced petition forms to be taken round whilst canvassing and put the petition on the back of the canvassing leaflet.

Week Two

Canvassing was already underway every day and the response on the doorsteps was good, particularly to the petition.

The first leaflet took a weekend and well into the next week to deliver as little help arrived. Within days the petition slips were arriving in large batches in every post. The "Massive Response" headline in Focus number 2 was more than justified.

By this time we had seen the first sight of the other party leaflets. They were fairly boring and uninforma-

tive election addresses. Usefully they told us all about the other party candidates' links with Hardwick, a ward at the opposite end of the town. Daphne Nash was now "the only LOCAL choice".

Week Three

Because of time constraints the second Focus was only A4. Daphne had got a good set of action photos done, including plenty taken outside the Horton. The front page was a photo, the "Massive Response" headline, a brief story, a petition form and a "two horse race" box.

The back featured the school cuts campaign and a brief biography of Daphne Nash, the only local choice.

More help was starting to turn out. The second leaflet went out over the next weekend. Canvassing had also speeded up and the results were showing that our support was strong with little solid support for either of the other parties.


Second canvassing started by telephone. Canvass sheets were run off for the areas already first canvassed and these were sent out to volunteers with a briefing sheet and a script. The volunteers were asked to phone

Daphne Nash Called To See You Today

Daphne Nash and your local Liberal Democrats called to see you today.

Daphne Nash is asking every local resident to sign the petition to Save the Horton. Please sign the form overleaf and return it to Daphne as soon as possible.

Daphne would also like to ask for your support in the County Council by-election on Thursday 16th November.




Daphne came second last time and is best placed to defeat the Conservatives this time.

The best person for the job is ...

Daphne NASH
X

Printed by OXWAB Lib Dem Printing Society, 8 Abbey Close, Abingdon, and published by Neil Fawcett, 8 Abbey Close, Abingdon.

Banbury Easington By-election



Thursday 16th Nov.

Your chance to have your say

The front of the calling leaflet - the back was a 'Save the Horton' petition form

those with phone numbers who had not yet been canvassed.

The sheets were then sent back to our OXWAB computer officer, Ray Jones. We also added all past data on our supporters onto the computer.

The petition slips were continuing to flood in. Hundreds so far. Some residents had started going out off their own backs and collecting them in from their neighbours.

During the second week Daphne received a "Thank you" card from one elderly resident who suffered from asthma. Her life had been saved twice by the Horton and she was desperately scared of what would happen to her if the Horton closed.

This issue was clearly the most important to the electorate. I decided to go for a very hard hitting final weekend leaflet. It would be A3 portrait style with the top third taken up with a strong message about the Horton.

The leaflet was designed so that when folded it would not look like a "Focus", but the artwork would include a mock up of the card Daphne had been sent along with a brief slogan: "Use your vote to send them a message this Thursday".

Polling Week

More help turned up at the final weekend so that despite appalling weather the final A3 leaflet went out.

Nearly the whole ward had been first canvassed and some of the telephone data was also on the computer. Cross referencing showed that nearly all our old supporters were still with us so we agreed to use the old data for targeting purposes.

We ran off two sets of labels for target letters and Good Mornings and copied these over the final weekend in OXWAB.

We would target three groups: Lib Dems (Definite and Probable); Labour (Hard and Soft); and Soft Tories.

The message to our supporters was that the result would be close and their vote was vital. Labour supporters were told that Daphne was campaigning hard to save the Horton and that the Lib Dems were the main challengers to the Tories. The soft Tories were told that many Tories would be using the by-election to tell the Government that they were out of touch, and that Daphne was the only local choice.

Use your vote to send them

"Dear Daphne,

Thank you for giving us the chance to protest ...

My life depends on having a Casualty Department here in Banbury ...

I am severely asthmatic ... they have saved my life twice ... I couldn't make it to Oxford."

Just one of many responses to Daphne Nash's petition to save the Horton.

a message this

Thursday

Thursday's by-election can't change the Government, but it can send them a powerful message that their health policies have to change.

Hundreds of local people have signed Daphne Nash's petition to save the Horton - now you can have your say at the ballot box too.

Please don't waste the chance to have your say.

The top third of the final weekend A3 leaflet - designed for impact on the doorstep

These messages were used in both the letters and the Good Mornings.

The letters were delivered during the Tuesday and Wednesday of polling week.

Polling Day

I don't think Banbury Liberal Democrats knew quite what to expect!

We were up early to deliver Good Mornings. A couple of Oxford students came up the night before to help and made a real difference. I knew we wouldn't get them out as quickly as I would have liked but they were all out during the morning which wasn't bad as it was very cold and drizzling.

The post arrived with about another hundred petition signatures in it. The total so far is about 1,700 signatures.

Ray Jones brought his computer up from OXWAB and also the shuttleworths. We had included all Definites and Probables from canvassing back to 1992. This gave us 1,500 names.

We had a full tellers rota until 7pm and the numbers started trickling through during the morning. We also had two ladies doing tea, soup, sandwiches and cakes at the committee room kitchen. This was extremely good for morale on a horrible day.

Labour, for some reason, didn't have any tellers. the Tories, at this stage, were covering the stations.

The turnout was obviously low. Our turnout was well ahead of average from the start, but by lunchtime only about 5% of the electorate had voted!

By early afternoon we started knocking up. Much was done by telephone and we picked up a lot of car calls this way. I was sending people home with bundles of shuttleworth sheets to do.

I didn't want to send people out too much too early (not my usual approach!) because they would get wet and cold and give up and I knew we would need a big evening effort.

The response we got was very positive. There were a lot who couldn't vote, but very few who weren't still with us. Loads were dead keen. By mid afternoon I was feeling positive, but convinced that we would only win if we got our people out in a low poll.

At around three o'clock the rain stopped. The door knocking then started in earnest. People were turning up to help and the tellers rota was holding up, despite

the weather. The turnout remained slow but our percentage kept edging ahead.

By late afternoon we started to hear stories about Tory tellers abandoning their posts. It appeared that some hadn't been relieved and that their slips weren't being collected. Added to this they had to listen to our tellers telling them how nice our "soup kitchen" was and this obviously proved too much for them.

The only thing that could stop us now would be a sudden Tory push in the evening. It was expected, but never came. As the evening went on it became clear that we were the only party really working, and our turnout continued to push ahead of the average.

By 7pm the overall turnout was around 18% whilst ours was approaching 30%. We were well into the second knock up by now and I was sending people out with their final batches. A couple of people volunteered to carry on telling until 8pm (obviously mad) and we carried on, on the doorsteps.

Soon after 8pm the knocker uppers started to arrive back. By half past only Daphne Nash was left ringing up people who lived nearest to the polling stations (and still turning them out!)

I knew by this stage that we had either won, or our canvassing was duff.

The count

We entered the count nervous but in good heart. The count started swiftly and my agents had good seats. As each box was verified it became clear we had done it. In our best box we were winning 15 or more out of 25. In the weakest box we were still ahead.

The result was declared at 10.20pm to a stunned candidate, jubilant Lib Dems and some very annoyed Tories.

As I wandered out to phone the result through to ALDC and various interested people I overheard one of the Tories ringing the notable local Tory councillor "Choppy Spencer": "Hello, is that Choppy," he said. "I've got the result, are you sitting down?"

Good Morning

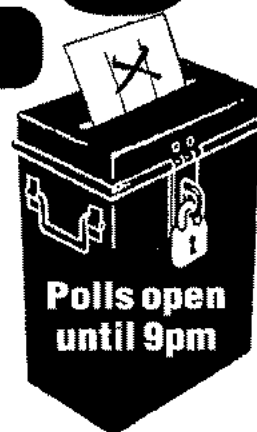


Today is Polling Day

Today's election looks set to be a very close finish.

Daphne Nash could be only a handful of votes from victory.

Every vote for the Liberal Democrats is crucial.



3 things to remember

- 1 Daphne Nash is campaigning to Save the Horton and for more cash for local schools.
- 2 Daphne Nash is the only LOCAL candidate - the others are from Hardwick.
- 3 Daphne Nash came second last time - the Lib Dems are the challengers in this election.

Your vote will send a powerful message that we want to Save the Horton.

The polls are open until 9pm. Please remember to go and vote today.

For a lift to the polling station please ring:

259596

Daphne NASH | X

Printed by OXWAB Lib Dem Printing Society, 8 Abbey Close, Abingdon published by Neil Fawcett, 8 Abbey Close, Abingdon.

The inside of the Good Morning leaflet which was delivered to our supporters on polling day. There were also editions for Labour supporters and soft Tories

Lessons learnt

- **The traditional ALDC approach worked well. We fought a strong campaign, stuck to our agenda and worked hard.**
- **Our clear policies on health, education and crime are very popular.**
- **The Tories are not recovering. Labour are not unbeatable.**
- **Generating extra help is vital. Many of our own County Councillors didn't help - some of them because they thought we couldn't win. Our own lack of confidence is our biggest enemy.**
- **Intelligent use of the telephone made a tremendous difference to the level of canvass data and enabled many extra people to do their bit.**
- **A good polling day operation delivered victory on a low poll. We ended up getting around 40% of our supporters out, the average turnout was only 24.5%.**

Training to win

The Scottish Liberal Democrats launched a new training initiative at the autumn conference of the Party in Dunfermline on 4th November. A presentation on the new scheme "Training to win" was given by the Scottish Training Task Group, Andy Myles, Chief Executive of the Scottish Party, Cllr Iain Smith, former Convener of ASLDC and Dr. Derek Barrie, ALDC Scottish Officer.

The scheme sets out a menu of individual training modules for Local Parties, together with suggestions as to how local parties might want to put together a package to make up a full training day. The scheme is designed to take training to Local Parties to enhance the skills of local activists. The modules cover Local Party organisation, campaigning and fighting elections, both local and national. Training can also be offered to Council Groups.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats have built up a team of 24 trainers from throughout Scotland, all accredited un-

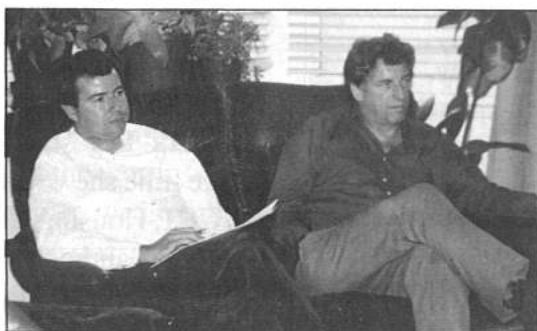
der the Federal Party's training for trainers programme. Only accredited trainers will be used in the provision of Local party training. It is also intended to increase the number of trainers through a further training for trainers course in the

new year. Since the launch of the scheme a further number of people have asked to be trained.

But introducing a comprehensive scheme of local party based training does not mean that national training will be discontinued. Training weekends for PPCs and Agents, for target seats and specialist media training will continue to be offered. Moreover, training for councillors and campaigners will figure high on the

agenda of next February's ASLDC weekend conference in North Berwick.

Anyone in Scotland interested in organising a training day, finding out more about the scheme or wishing to be trained as a trainer should, in the first instance, contact the Scottish Party's administrator, Mrs. Rae Grant at HQ on 0131 337 2314.



Cllrs Jim Tolson and Denis Male attending a candidates training weekend in Edinburgh

Who's Who?

For readers new and old the question of who is who, and who does what on the staff team can be a bit baffling. So here is the GC Guide to who we all are, what we do, and where we do it.

When Can You Call Us?

The ALDC office at Birchcliffe Centre is staffed from 9.15am to 5.15pm Monday to Friday. You will often find staff there working both earlier and later than that. In any case there is an answerphone available out of hours to take your messages (or if we are all in the loo, already on the phone etc. the tape also 'kicks in' between 9.15am-5.15pm). The tape will usually also give an emergency number you can ring if you need urgent political advice. The political staff whose numbers are given here will not (usually!) mind taking calls from you at any reasonable time.

Getting to Know Us

We have seven 'political' staff and three administration staff. Our administration staff all work at the Birchcliffe Centre, with Howard and Adam from the political staff. Andrew is there three days a week, whilst Paul, Jackie, Graham, and Derek are 'outworkers'.

Who's in Charge?

Andrew Stunell is Political Secretary. That makes him The Boss. With overall responsibility for everything, he still has particular tasks, like party relations, media contacts, and direction of the local government election campaign. He is also our parish and local council "expert", although he admits sheepishly that he has never lived in a parished area yet.

Andrew is a Stockport MB councillor, and PPC for Hazel Grove. **You can contact Andrew either at ALDC (3 days a week), or at home:**

84 Lyme Grove,
Romiley,
Stockport SK6 4DJ

Tel (and fax by arrangement): 0161- 430- 6739

Campaign and Training Guru

Paul Burstow is Campaigns Officer. As you might guess he is responsible for much of ALDC's input into campaigning for the party. He is developing our training to meet the new needs of a much expanded number of activists and councillors. Paul has taken on the job of analysing and improving our business systems, as part of our constant efforts to get a quart from a pint pot. He deputises as Boss when Andrew is away.

Paul is Deputy Leader of our majority group on Sutton LB. **Paul can usually be found working from his (new) home.**

15 Hove Gardens

Sutton

Surrey SM1 3EZ

Tel and fax: 0181- 641- 8775

email: pburstow@cix.compulink.co.uk

Supporting Our Council Groups

Jackie Ballard is our Council Support Officer. With 54 majority groups and 130 with influence, not to mention another 261 where we haven't, Jackie has plenty to do. Part of her job is to make sure other staff and our small team of volunteer advisors are put to good use responding to, visiting, or providing training for all of our groups. She also makes many visits herself. Jackie is editor of our Majority Group Leaders' Digest, which is produced quarterly. In her spare time she writes briefings on such diverse topics as CCT, Housing, and Employment & Personnel, and she is the author of ALDC's latest booklet 'Beyond Public Question Time'.

In her 'spare' time Jackie serves as a humble back-bencher on Somerset County Council, and PPC for Taunton. **You can contact Jackie at her Taunton office during office hours:**

Tel: 01823- 337874, Fax: 01823- 323075

email: jackieballard@cix.compulink.co.uk

or via her home address:

71, Greenway Crescent,
Taunton,
Somerset TA2 6NH
Tel & Fax: 01823-324512
at other times.

Developing Members' Services

Howard Sykes is our Development Officer. He and Adam (see below) are our two fully office-based political staff. Howard will be your normal 'first stop' with queries about council procedure, business and organisation, and assists Jackie in the wider council support role. He is 'el supremo' on membership promotion, where we have reached new heights this year, and coordinates production of Grassroots Campaigner, our subscription mailing. You are now reading the first edition of GC! Howard's other big job is to coerce a motley band of scribes and editors into meeting all our publication and mailing deadlines. This summer he took time off to be Agent in the Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election. Yes, he achieved that target, too.

He is Deputy Group Leader of our opposition group on Oldham MB. You can contact Howard at Hebden Bridge.

Doing it All in Scotland

Derek Barrie is our Scottish Officer. Nominally we get a third of his time, with his work for the Scottish Party, and as Key Seats Worker in Scotland for the Federal Party taking the other two thirds. In practice Derek does a very skilled job juggling his priorities and time, convincing all three employers that he works full time for them! In the words of one former member of Standing Committee 'he is really a mini Andrew Stunell' - except that he doesn't have a team of people to delegate the bad bits to! Derek was Agent at the Perth & Kinross By election. But before that he helped get the largest number of Liberal Democrats ever elected in one go, in the Scottish Unitary Elections last April (123, if you must know).

Derek is a former leader of our majority group on North East Fife, and lives in St Andrews. He works from home, but is in the Scottish Party HQ office in

Edinburgh two days a week. You can contact Derek at home:

13, Lindsay Gardens,
St Andrews,
Fife KY16 8XB
Tel & Fax: 01334-475502
email: derekbarrie@cix.compulink.co.uk

Information and Advice

Adam Boyer is our new Information Officer, based at Hebden Bridge. He will be your first stop with questions and queries on a huge range of local government issues. He presides over the North's largest collection of filing cabinets - and one of his priorities is to chuck out the junk, catalogue the rest, and halve the number of cabinets! Adam is our by-election diary and results guru, and eats your statistics. Please feed him! He also is taking on the task of planning our conference and fringe programmes, including Nottingham next spring.

You can contact Adam at Hebden Bridge. He particularly wants all your by-election details, please, and then your results.

Volunteer Coordinator

Graham Rix is responsible for implementing the ALDC plan to expand and develop our network of volunteers. That includes political advisors, campaign trainers, and our band of 'experts' on specialist topics. He has regularised our rather haphazard systems, manages our network, and is now recruiting volunteers, and arranging for the trainers to be trained and accredited by the Party.

Graham also supports Paul's campaign training work by promoting training opportunities, and arranging a programme of training events. If you want to volunteer, or want ALDC to provide training, Graham would like to hear from you. You can write to him at Hebden Bridge.

Graham is based at home, and can be contacted by phone or fax on: 01491-836621

Making It All Happen

Our administration unit does all the hard work whilst the political staff swan round at meetings.....

Val Pilling is our **Senior Administrative Officer**, taking responsibility for finances and the accounts, and for keeping the Political Secretary up to scratch. These, plus a dozen other things, including conference bookings, not to mention dealing with the VAT man, and calculating the salaries, leave her ready to relax - by getting up at 5.00am to groom her daughters' show ponies.

Ted Parkinson is the **Senior Administration Officer** with special responsibility for **ALDC membership and councillor records**. That's been a job that has got bigger and bigger. It is Ted who will answer your query about renewal dates, or print out the list of our members in your area (so you can recruit the rest!). He also is a computer specialist who been invaluable as we launch ourselves into Cyberspace, or more prosaically, struggle to log on!

David Ball is our **Administration Assistant**. He works at the Centre each afternoon and all day Friday. Apart from making a very handy brew, he runs our publication mail order business, and keeps a meticulous paper circulation system running despite everything that gets dropped into his in tray. His dry humour is much in vogue, too.

From time to time ALDC also uses helpers and volunteers in the office when we are faced with special jobs or peak loads. Our thanks to them for helping us keep the show on the road, too. We'd like to give a special mention to Richard Ormerod (Ribble Valley) and Kay Knox (Oldham) for their contributions.

Remember, we are here to help you. Do write, or ring, or fax, or email us. Send us your views, your Focus (three copies please), your bright ideas, your council motions, your snippets about the other parties' follies.... And if you want (political) advice or consolation we're here. If we don't know the answer, we probably know a man (or a person) who does.

Why

People trust their councillors more than they do their MP. They are seen as more in touch with their constituents, and more concerned about their needs. Councillors in rural areas were more highly regarded than those in urban areas, too. More than half of all voters say that they vote for a particular party in local elections, regardless of who the candidate is. Only 6% said that they would vote for a candidate regardless of party.

These results are taken from the British Survey of Attitudes, published last month. The study, by Young and Rao, called 'Faith in Local Democracy', is just a part of the latest stage of a 12 year study by Social and Community Planning Research (SCRIP). The study paints a picture of growing popular disillusion with politics. For Liberal Democrats one good thing is that there is also a growing willingness to see changes in the way we are governed. Whereas in 1973 48% thought that Britain's system of government could not be improved, that has now fallen to 29%, with those believing it could be improved rising from 49% to 69%. The 'net change' of +1% then is now up to +40%.

Losing Touch

The survey looked at perceptions of councillors and MPs, and found both wanting. The figures are shown in the table below. The consolation is that whereas councillors had a net score of +24%, MPs were seen as losing touch by a net +58%. Councillors could gain a little further satisfaction from the almost neutral answer to the proposition that 'they don't care much what people like me think'. There is no breakdown of the party to which the councillors or MPs belonged. Maybe we can take it that all the bad opinions related to Labour and Tories! See table 1 opposite.

Party or Person?

Debates about the value of personalities and 'strong names' will be fuelled by the results of the survey into what factors are important when people vote in local

do they vote for Us?

Table 1

	agree	councillors		agree	MPs	
		neutral	disagree		neutral	disagree
Lose touch with people pretty quickly	47	28	23	72	12	14
Don't care much about what people think	36	28	34	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 2

	All	Con	Lab	LD
Vote for party, regardless of candidate	52	57	62	42
Vote for party if approve of candidate	28	26	25	42
Vote for candidate, regardless of party	6	6	4	6
Generally don't vote	14	9	8	10

elections. Over half who responded said that they would vote for a particular party regardless of the candidate. Just over a quarter said that they would vote for the party if they approved of the candidate. Whilst 6% said they would put candidate before party, an implausible 14% said they generally did not vote. With average national turnouts in local elections around 40-45%, there is some substantial wishful thinking here! See table 2 above.

It can be seen that Labour voters show up as most 'loyal' to their party (donkey with a red rosette syndrome), whilst Liberal Democrat voters are the most discriminating, with the vote potentially doubling if they approve of the candidate. These figures need to be treated with caution, not only because people overestimate their likelihood to vote, but also because their 'approval' of a candidate may well be induced by, for instance, a strong Focus campaign, rather than an intrinsically 'strong', or 'popular' name.

The very low number of people who would vote for a candidate 'regardless of party' gives a hint of two further factors. First, that some of the sensational 'big swings' seen in by-elections are created by differential turnout - voters attracted to the polls, or abstaining, by the strengths or weaknesses of their own candidate, rather than switching. Second, that where there are 'switches' most people have to feel at least fairly happy with the party of the candidate they vote for.

It seems to be important both to attract our 'own' voters by illustrating the strength of our candidate, and to leave other voters with a positive (or at least neutral) view of the party.

Cleaning up the Mess

People increasingly think there is something wrong with the system of government in Britain. A separate part of the SCRP Study showed that there has been a steady decline in satisfaction levels - 29% now think it cannot be improved, and 69% think that it could be improved 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal'. Other parts of the survey show that there is great confusion on what might do the trick. Liberal Democrats can get little comfort from the answers on voting reform. Whilst 49% think a proportional system is a good idea, 60% think we should keep a system giving 'strong government'.

But the survey reveals huge disillusion with politicians in government. Three out of four think that governments seldom or never put the interests of the country before that of their party.

The Liberal Democrat theme of 'cleaning up the mess in politics' is clearly one that voters will support. They may be less sure about our specific remedies.

Election Campaigns - What Works Wins

What really does increase the turnout in elections? There are plenty of people who have their own pet theories about what works and what does not. But not a lot of research has been done. Richard Balmer from Solihull has produced some interesting results from a study he has been carrying out since 1990. The findings are interesting reading.

Since 1990 I have played around with the election results in an attempt to find out what types of campaigning work, and what do not.

In local elections, turn out is low. It is thus possible to win wards with less support than our opponents, but with higher turnout of our supporters. In particular I have attempted to assess the effect of canvassing. We never have enough resources and need to canvass in the most productive way.

In addition, this year, I tried to work out how effective an "eve of poll" letter had been. This letter was a new venture and consumed a lot of resources. It appeared well worthwhile.

Voting Patterns

My canvass records give an indication of how consistently each elector votes. I can tell when a "nonvoter" (i.e. someone who did not vote in 1994) last voted, back to 1987. One imagines most electors always vote, or never vote. In fact about 1/4 always, and another 1/4 never, vote in local elections. 50% wander around in between. Table 1 shows the different % voting. (For simplicity I have considered only the first 2 electors in each house. These represent 92% of all votes.)

Table 1 - % Voting by former record

Record	%
Voted '95	Voted
Last 3+ times	77
Last 2 times	63
Last time	53
Not since 1992	34
" " " 1991	25
" " " 1990	17
" " " 1988	15
" " " 1987	13
Never, this ward	7
New to ward	26
Average	41

The best predictor of whether an elector will vote is whether they voted last time. Table 2 shows that last time's voters are 4 times as likely to come out, than nonvoters.

Table 2 - Voters and "Nonvoters"

Record	No	Voting '95
Voted 94	3327	67%
Not voting 94	3656	17%
Total	6983	Av 41%

Table 3 compares the behaviour of our supporters, with non supporters. Our supporters are clearly keener than the rest (56% compared to 34%), but it must be remembered that we have targeted at least some of our supporters, and some of "the rest", are apathetic "no party" people.

Table 3 - Supporters and non-supporters

	Voting '95	
Record	Supporters	Non S'ters
Voted 94	73%	62%
Not voting 94	32%	15%
Average	56%	34%

Canvassing

Table 4 shows the effect of canvassing supporters. This year, canvassing raised the turn out by 4% (from 72 to 76%) amongst "voters", and by 8% (from 24 to 32%) amongst "nonvoters". For each 100 houses canvassed, the votes increased by 8 and 16, (assuming 2 people/house), i.e. 1 per 12 and 1 per 6 houses respectively.

Table 4 Cnv'd and Non-cnv'd supporters

	Voting 95	
Record	Cnv'd	Not cnv'd
Voted 94	76%	72%
Not voting 94	32%	24%
Average	59%	55%

I have found this 1 to 2 ratio between "voters" and "nonvoters" consistently in the past. However, the "yield" varies. When the electorate is really angry, as it was in the poll tax years and with VAT on fuel in 1994, the "yields" go up.

Table 4 does not show the whole picture. In Table 5 I have compared the % voting between those canvassed and those not, for all different voting records.

Table 5 Gains from Cnv'ing

Record	% Voting '95		
Voted:	All	Cnv'd	Gain
Last 3+ times	77	80	+3
Last 2 times	63	69	+6
Last time	53	60	+9
Not since 1992	34	45	+11
" " 1991	25	41	+16
" " 1990	17	28	+11
" " 1988	15	25	+10
" " 1987	13	-	-
Never, this ward	7	12	+5
New to ward	26	38	+12
Average	41	50	+9

One should not go overboard with the results because some sample sizes are getting small, but the trend is clear. The best electors to canvass are those who have voted in the past, but not in the most recent years. In comparison, the "yields" from canvassing those who always vote and those who never vote, are small. (Note, the canvassed group is skewed towards supporters and the apparent "gains" are a little high.)

Eve of Poll Letters

This year, for the first time, we sent "eve of poll", "personal" letters to supporters. I undertook a trial of about 500 households, separated into 2 matched groups. One group received the letter, the other not. The results are given in Table 6.

The letter had the effect of increasing the turnout of our supporters from 48 to 61% - 13%! Had we

not done this, (or delivered a "good morning" leaflet), our votes in Olton and Shirley East would have been down by about 400!

Table 6 - Effect of "Eve of Poll" letter

	% Voting 95	
Record	Letter	None
Voted 94	81%	64%
Not voting 94	24%	15%
Average	61%	48%

Letter or leaflet?

Until this year we always delivered a "good morning" or "eve of poll" leaflet. In 1992, I found the "good morning" leaflet worth only 1%, but 1992 was a depressed year for us. This year I did a small trial of 240 "matched" households. Again 61% of those supporters receiving a letter voted, but only 4% less voted (i.e. 57%) if they receive a leaflet.

Winter Canvassing

During the winter we spent Sunday afternoons calling on residents. I checked the subsequent voting records of the 70 supporters we called on in Shirley East, and matched them. The "voting" supporters went up from 66 to 69%: the "nonvoting" supporters from 20 to 46%

CONCLUSIONS:

- Canvassing increases the turn out of supporters. This year it was 4% for "voters", 8% for those not voting in 1994. This is a "yield" of 1 vote/12 houses and 1/6 houses respectively. The ratio of 1 to 2 is common, but the yield will be more in "angry" years.
- The most productive canvassing is of those who have voted in the past, but not in the last 2 or 3 years, and new voters.
- "Good morning" or "eve of poll" communications increase turnout. This year a leaflet increased supporter turn out by 9% and a personal letter by 13%.
- Winter canvassing seems to increase turnout, especially of nonvoter.

Editor's Comment: This sort of analysis of election results can be invaluable in better understanding what you need to do to successfully defend or win a seat. The findings of Richard's work confirm the view that it is vital to step up the paper campaign in the last few days of an election.

Stop the education cuts

The education campaign launched recently by the Scottish Liberal Democrats and ASLDC against cuts in funding for education in Scotland is gathering momentum. Petition signatures against the cuts are now coming in to HQ in Clifton Terrace in significant numbers.

If your Local party has not yet done so, please make arrangements to conduct the Head Teachers' survey contained in the mini campaign pack which has been made available to every Local Party. Already questionnaires have gone out to all Head Teachers in Lothian Region and over 50% have responded. Borders Region heads will be sent forms with covering letters from local MPs, Sir David Steel and Archy Kirkwood. If we get sufficient Local Parties from throughout Scotland conducting the surveys and sending the forms to Clifton Terrace we will get a good Scotland wide picture with which we can maximise the impact of our campaign in the Scottish media.

It is already clear from a preliminary analysis of the Lothian Region questionnaires that head teachers are particularly concerned about the lack of essential repairs to school buildings. A picture is emerging of larger classes being taught in decaying schools.

This is backed up by a survey of 10 of the 12 education authorities in Scotland by the Scottish Liberal Democrats which shows that £500 million is required for repairs of dilapidated schools and classrooms. The cost of needed repairs range from £142 million in the largest authority, Strathclyde, to £300,000 in Orkney.

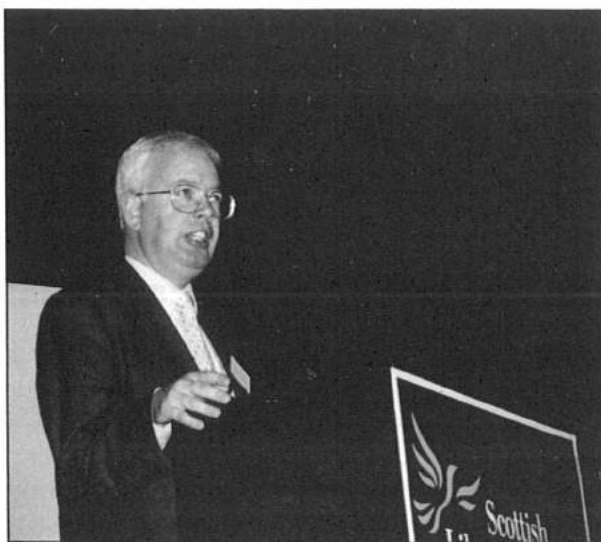
It is clear that the government is starving education authorities of funding to tackle the problems of run-down school buildings. Central Region for example, where £9.2 million would be needed for each of the next ten years to deal with school repairs, the author-

ity is currently only receiving about £5.5 million each year.

The Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Jim Wallace MP said: "This and other worrying examples result in many teachers and pupils throughout Scotland having to endure decaying classrooms. They are clamouring for repairs and extensions. One must wonder about the government's priorities when they think nothing of spending millions of pounds on motorways across the country and yet the future generations are being mistreated by disrepair of schools."

Mr. Wallace again stressed the Scottish Liberal Democrat commitment to an additional £55 million per annum on school buildings as part of a package of extra investment in education.

Please campaign on this issue locally. The Liberal Democrats are perceived as caring about education and having a commitment much greater to investment in education than any of the other parties. The Conservatives can be accused of hypocrisy in advocating tax cuts rather than investment in education while pretending that education is a major priority. Labour can be accused of failing to say where they



Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader, Jim Wallace MP, addressing the Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference in Dunfermline

would get the money to carry out their educational policies. The SNP would rather spend money on compulsory Gaelic in every Scottish school (even in areas where Gaelic has never been spoken) rather than on repairing school buildings.

For extra copies of the education campaign pack or for advice, contact **ALDC Scottish Officer, Derek Barrie at 4, Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5DR or phone him on 01334 475502.**

Tackling Crime

Although over the past few years crime rates in most of Scotland's regions have been falling, there is still considerable public fear of crime. Opinion polls still show law and order to be one of the main issues of concern.

It is important that we demonstrate that our concern to prevent crime and increase detection rates in particular is greater than that of either of the other major parties and that we have a track record to prove it. An example of campaigning on this issue is given below of an article in the current edition of our tabloid newspaper "West Edinburgh News".

Police under strength - Liberal Democrats proved correct. "At this year's Lothian and Borders Police Board budget meeting, the Liberal Democrats warned that the budget put forward by the Labour majority was too small to pay for the planned number of police and

proposed a higher figure to cover salary costs in full. The Conservatives made no proposals and did not vote. As the Liberal Democrats forecast, the Police Board is at present £2 million in deficit, the uniformed police at 51 below strength, other staff 57 below, and statistics show a continuing crime problem."

If you can find similar evidence from your police authority area or examples of Chief Constables asking for additional police officers but being turned down by the Secretary of State for Scotland, it is important that you highlight the points in your "Focuses", tabloid newspapers, target letters or other literature.

Lib Dems take chairs

Scottish Liberal Democrats are now involved in the administration of another of Scotland's unitary councils, following appointments to the chairs of new committees by Highland Council. Although holding only 5 of the 57 seats on the council, 2 Liberal Democrats have been appointed as Committee Chairmen and a further 2 vice-chairmen. The Highland Council is almost unique in that appointments tend to be made irrespective of party allegiance with all members being effectively treated as Independents.

The highly experienced Cllr John Farquhar Munro, Convener of Ross, Skye and Inverness West Liberal Democrat Local Party, will be chair of the Roads and Transportation Committee. Cllr Munro, who has been prominent in his opposition to the level of toll charges on the new Skye Bridge, is currently Convener of Skye and Lochalsh District Council, on which he is the sole Liberal Democrat, all other councillors being Independents.

The other convenership goes to Cllr Dr. Michael Foxley from Ardnamurchan in the Inverness East Nairn and Lochaber constituency. He takes charge of the Land Committee.

A former convener of Highland Region, Cllr Sandy Russell from Newtonmore is Vice-Chairman of

the Education Committee and first-time councillor, Jamie Stone from Tain in the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross constituency is Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee.

This now brings to six the total number of Scottish Councils on which Liberal Democrats have influence. In addition to these appointments on the Highland Council, they lead the administration in Aberdeenshire and are involved in Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders. They hold the balance in East Renfrewshire, where a by-election is pending in a Tory seat, giving broad support to a minority Labour administration. Finally, the two Liberal Democrat councillors on Shetland Islands Council are both committee vice-chairs.

Rail Privatisation Campaign

Although the Scottish Liberal Democrats have already handed in over 10,000 petition signatures to the Scottish Office against rail privatisation, we should continue to ridicule the government's plans and point out the absurdities of privatisation. Petition signatures should still be collected.

Clydebank and Milngavie Local Party, for example, are now sending out A4 petition forms against rail privatisation to the 400 or so people who sent back return petition slips from "Focus" urging them to find additional signatures.

Most tabloid newspapers currently being produced in Scotland contain "Off the rails" stories. An example from West Edinburgh is reproduced below to give you ideas for your own literature.

Railway privatisation plans falter

West Edinburgh Liberal Democrat parliamentary spokesman, Donald Gorrie has called for a halt to the madness of rail privatisation. He said: "The further the government travels down the track of railway privatisation, the more it turns into an expensive bureaucratic mess."

Liberal Democrat MP, Charles Kennedy, has already led a highly successful campaign to secure the sleeper service to Fort William against the wishes of the privatisers. Now Liberal Democrats are pledged to renationalise Railtrack - the company which runs all the railway lines on which the trains travel. "All we need is 51% of the shares," said Lib. Dem. Spokesman, Donald Gorrie. "And if other parties would join us in pledging to buy back Railtrack, it would make the whole sell-off unworkable. Tony Blair's 'new' Labour won't make that commitment. Liberal Democrats are serious about protecting our rail network. It is a pity the other parties



Liberal Democrats campaigning against rail privatisation at Inverness Station, including five Scottish MP's

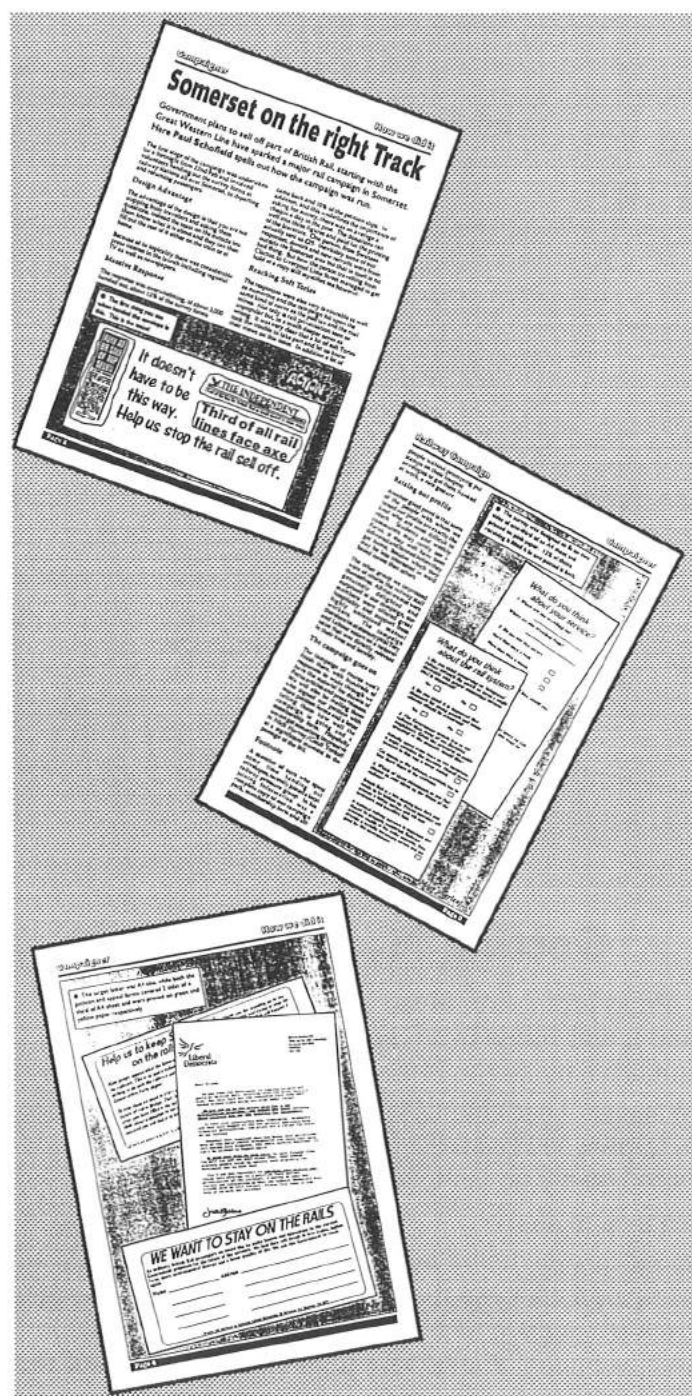
won't make any clear promises!"

Liberal Democrat spokesman, Donald Gorrie added: "The whole rail privatisation circus has become ludicrous. Did you know that there are now three lost property offices at Waverley Station depending whose train you left the lost property on?"

Scottish Liberal Democrats are continuing to collect signatures to a petition against rail privatisation. Many thanks to those of you who have already signed. To date over 10,000 signatures have been passed to the Secretary of State for Transport. If you think that rail privatisation is wrong and will lead to a worse service, and have not already done so, please sign the petition on the back page.

Somerset keeps up the pressure on Rail Privatisation

In March 1993 Campaigner reported on the rail privatisation campaign being masterminded by Campaigns Officer Paul Schofield. Since then the campaign has not just gone away and now Paul reports on the latest round of campaigning across Somerset.



The planned sell off of Great Western and South West Trains means that all main line services in Somerset will soon be in private hands. Liberal Democrats in the County have long been campaigning against privatisation and a couple of years ago carried out a very successful campaign based on handing out campaign material in freepost envelopes to passengers travelling from the County's nine stations.

Self-financing

So good was the response that the costs of the campaign was paid for from donations solicited from a form enclosed in the pack.

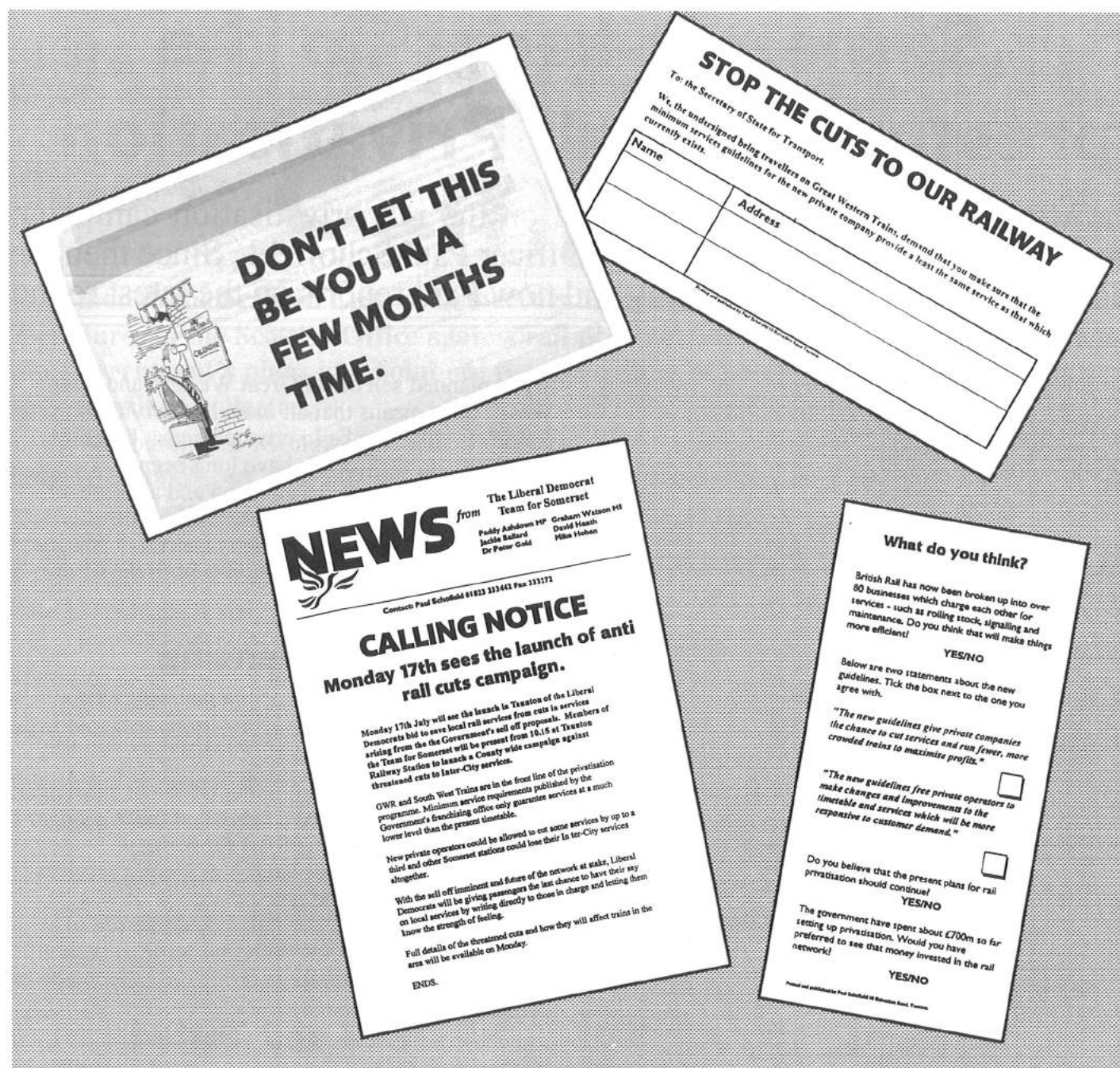
As part of the privatisation the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF) published the Passenger Services Requirements (PSRs) for the new companies. These specified the minimum services that could be run by the new operators. It was no surprise to find that fewer trains could be run to a laxer timetable and some marginal services were given no guarantee at all.

Tried and Tested

We decided to run with a successful formula and try the same campaigning technique again.

We produced a set of leaflets to be handed out at stations in freepost envelopes. The advantage of this is that you are not buttonholing busy passengers to try and explain why you are there and then expecting them to sign petitions etc. on the spot.

Many passengers are only vaguely aware of what you are doing as they dash for trains or the car park but when they settle on their journey they have the opportunity to look at what you have given them at leisure. This means that you can expect a good deal more from them in return.



New Ideas

This time in the envelope we included a letter from the local PPC, a petition form against the cuts, a questionnaire about privatisation and a blank letter to the director of OPRAF.

The blank letter was a different idea for us. Lots of people sign petitions but fewer write letters on subjects they care about.

Rail passengers however would have the time to sit down and write during their journey and a high proportion of them have done just that.

Getting Media Interest

Press promotion of the issue was very important and it was billed in advance as a Somerset-wide initiative by all the PPCs, Paddy and MEP Graham Watson. That kind of launch is done as part of what is known as 'Team for Somerset' which is actually based on a Cornish idea.

The advantage is that we can attract regional and broadcast media by billing it as a wide ranging campaign and also the PPCs can get publicity on the back of Graham and Paddy's prestige. At the same time we tailor individual press releases in each of the

PPCs constituencies to their local papers.

In the event the launch attracted regional TV, local radio and a clutch of regional and local newspapers. So on that level it can also be claimed a success.

Transferable Technique

Given the troubled recent history of railway

privatisation it may or may not be possible to use this particular campaign more widely. The point however is that the techniques have proved very useful in getting messages to and responses from the travelling public.

The way the press launch worked could also be adopted now that more areas are filling up with PPCs.



Have your say in Brentwood

As soon as we took over running Brentwood Borough Council they worked hard to open the council to the public, with public question time and other measures familiar to former Grapevine readers. One of the more innovative ideas in Brentwood is the Town Forum which meets on the same cycle as council committees. Its membership includes representatives of many town organisations e.g. parish councils, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rural Dean, pressure groups and the police.

The key to the Forum's success is that the agenda is not predetermined by the Council but is open to members of the forum to bring up whatever issues concern them. The items which come up through the Town Forum are then fed into the Council's committee process. This way Brentwood believe they are really involving local people by starting from where the people are, not from what happens to be on a committee agenda. The agenda is set by the people of Brentwood.

An example of an initiative which has come up through the forum is the 'cash back' parking scheme launched in October and jointly set up by the Borough Council and the Chamber of Commerce. Under the scheme people can get cash back on their parking tickets if they spend over £2 at participating shops. The Forum can also act as a focus for campaigning on issues, not under the council's control but which affect local residents like the closure of a British Gas showroom.

Other forums for public participation in the Borough include: the tenants' consultative committee which meets each cycle and a member of which sits on the Council's Housing Committee, a Youth Forum made up of young people from schools and youth clubs who tell the councillors what they want in terms of facilities and a Pensioners' Forum.

The Council have also used their influence to get other bodies in to talk to the Community Services committee about their work e.g. the local hospital and the blood transfusion service.

An enabling Council

Brentwood has a strong commitment to the needs



The first 'Crazy Golf' course in the country that has been specifically designed to be accessible for all

of people with disabilities and has worked hard to raise the profile of the disabled in the Borough by holding a disability conference, initiating a shopmobility scheme and increasing awareness of accessibility issues - for example they have one of the few crazy golf courses with full access for wheelchairs.

In common with a number of other authorities Brentwood have installed CCTV in response to a growing crime wave, especially theft of cars from outside the Brentwood leisure centre. CCTV in the town centre cost £250,000 to install and has a running cost of £100,000 per year. The screens are monitored 24 hours a day at Brentwood Council offices by 12 disabled people. Recently an attempted suicide was thwarted because it was spotted on screen and since the system was installed reported crime has dropped by two-thirds.

Brentwood have won an award from the charity "Opportunities for the Disabled" - the best in the South East region and had their names put forward for a National award for their employment opportunities in their CCTV control room.

Opening up Pendle Council

In 1982 16 Liberals (out of a Council of 51) took control of Pendle Borough Council, with Labour refusing to take part. In that year we were able to peg the rates and to start opening up the Council. Pendle can properly claim to be one of the first councils in the country to allow members of the public to ask questions at planning sub committee meetings. Each person who wants to speak is allowed up to 5 minutes to speak

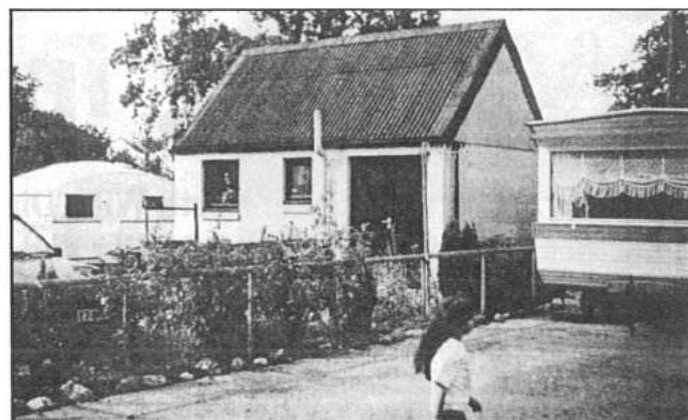
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Balancing the books in Harrogate

When we took over the running of Harrogate Borough Council we inherited from the Tories a cash balance of minus £314,000, a Direct Labour Organisation which had made a loss of £1.6 million and a £24 million debt on the conference centre. The Council lacked adequate information systems to highlight the financial crisis and the Tories had refused to believe how bad things were. In April 1991 Management Consultants presented a damning report on the state of the Borough with its endemic culture of secrecy and suspicion. A new Chief Executive, a new Financial Director and later a new Technical Services Director were appointed, committees were reduced by half, the financial problems were taken seriously and the Liberal Democrats started to implement their agenda.

A quick review of some of the successes from 1991-4 reveals:

- That cash balances at 31/3/93 were £1.6 million.
- The debt on the conference centre was down to £14 million,
- A new era of openness had begun with public question time at all service committees,
- Progress is monitored at each committee cycle,
- The revenue budget was held at the capping limit for the whole of the three years and
- 20% less staff are employed, without compulsory redundancies being necessary, what's more services have been improved.



Tarvit Mill Farm

A Model Travellers' Site

One of the many places Jackie Ballard visited, on her trip to North East Fife, was Tarvit Mill Farm.

It was also one of the achievements of which Clive Sneddon, LD Group Leader, was most proud - a travellers' site built on the site of an old commercial caravan site.

The decision to build the site was taken in 1986 amidst much public controversy and finally implemented in 1988 - replacing an unofficial travellers' encampment in Cupar car park.

The site is 2 miles out of town, and has 20 pitches, a school unit on site, a resident warden and the nearby Mansion House is used as a homeless family hostel with its own resident warden. The site is neatly laid out with well cared for gardens and grounds and a well used children's play area.

The controversy is now forgotten. It is considered to be a model for other sites in Scotland - the nuisance of illegal encampments throughout the district has virtually disappeared and the welfare and integration of travellers has been enhanced.

at the time the item is being discussed (rather than at the beginning of the meeting only); the facility is open to objectors and to applicants and it is quite normal for there to be 100 people in the public gallery for planning meetings with 20 people using their right to speak.

Mayor making

Many Councils spend hours debating the Mayoralty and who should have it each year. In Pendle they have had the same

system since 1980, which was originally invented by Michael Meadowcroft. With this system each group on the council is allocated a point per group member, the group with the most points gets the Deputy Mayor - who goes on to become Mayor the following year - and promptly loses 51 points (the total number of councillors on the Council); the following year each group gets a point per group member added to their total and the group with the largest number of points has the Deputy Mayor. Over a number of years this provides strictly proportional allocation of the mayoralty and does away with annual disputes.

Working in partnership

The phrase on the front of North Wilts District Council's Forward Strategy is "working in partnership with the people who live and work in North Wiltshire".

Indeed the main themes running through all the Liberal Democrat initiatives in North Wilts are participation and partnership. One example of participation which has been particularly successful is tenant participation in housing. To get it off the ground they started with a series of road shows to ask tenants what kind of participative structure they would prefer. The structure ultimately chosen was to have 6 Area Tenants' Panels based on the six main towns. Each panel is consulted every cycle on the issues which are likely to be discussed by the district's housing committee. The Area Panels elected representatives on to the District Panel which has 5 nonvoting places on the Council's housing committee.

The District Panel meets on the same cycle as the housing committee and goes through all parts of the Housing and Health Agenda which affect tenants. Their recommendations on each item are then distributed to members of the housing committee. District Panel meetings are open to any councillor to observe, but 6 councillors sit on the panel as non voting members. All tenants' reps who attend Area Panels, District Panel and Housing Committee are entitled to the same at-

tendance allowance as is paid to councillors. This makes a big difference in encouraging tenants to participate and the total annual cost is small in relation to the Housing Revenue Account.

The tenants therefore have a significant input into the Housing Committee decision making process, include rent setting and capital budget. The Liberal Democrats in North Wilts are committed to consulting and listening to tenants and many of them faced a real dilemma when the Tenants' Panel decided they wanted to consider Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the council's housing stock. The conflict between many councillors' desire to retain council ownership of the housing and their commitment to tenant participation was resolved by the Council agreeing to go to ballot on LSVT, but to retain a neutral stance.

LATEST NEWS: Since the original Grapevine article was written, the ballot on LSVT has taken place - over 70% wanted it to go ahead and the DoE have agreed, transfer to a single Housing Association will take place on December 11th. The Board of the Association will comprise of 3 councillors, 5 tenants and 7 (independent) members of the community.

Leading in West Cornwall

For many years Cornwall County Council has been keenly aware of the economic problems in the County and In West Cornwall in particular and of the need to support and develop the 3,500 small businesses in the area to help to regenerate the rural economy.

The West Cornwall LEADER project was established in the Summer of 1992. The original application for European funding set out to establish a Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development in West Cornwall as a major resource for "adding value to people, products and the environment". The business plan was put together by Cornwall County Council, MAFF and the Rural Development Commission. Rosewarne (which

was previously an experimental horticulture station) was purchased as a base for the project and buildings converted to provide:

- an educational and training centre for around 500 students
- a commercial farm which generates income and provides practical experience for students,
- a community resource

continued on page 27

Go Getting in St Albans

Tourism and economic development are two high priorities for the Liberal Democrats in St Albans. St Albans has been a market town for more than 1000 years. There is a highly successful local authority run street market twice a week in St Albans, which is the best run in the country according to the National Federation of Market Traders. The market acts as an economic magnet for all the traders in the town and the policy of limiting the number of stalls selling any particular goods has kept a balanced mixed market of 170 stalls.

Out of town shopping centres are marketed seriously with a large advertising budget. The growth of these centres has hit the city centre of St Albans as much as anywhere else and so in May this year a City Centre Manager was appointed on a two year contract. The post is jointly funded by the Chamber of Commerce, the local business community and the District Council. The City Centre Management Board, which is made up of 2 council officers and reps from the business community, decide on the Manager's tasks and he then reports direct on his actions to the Council's Economic Development sub committee.

The Manager is in the ideal position to lobby, bully and cajole and has already had a number of successes -

- a 14 room teaching block

There is also an exchange programme to share ideas and experiences with other LEADER projects in Central Brittany, La Mayenne and South Pembroke.

The second part of the funding application for LEADER II (from 1994-99) concentrates on developing the local community involvement in West Cornwall and aims to enable the communities of West Cornwall and Isles of Scilly to develop a sustainable rural economy. The objectives for this phase are:

- to implement a programme of 57 village or parish appraisals to increase local community involvement in future economic action.
- to expand the use of Rosewarne
- to establish market mechanisms for creating



St Albans 'go getting' team

getting businesses to erect hanging flower baskets, getting the council to plant roundabouts, issuing a newsletter and organising an Open Day with a programme of street events to promote the city. He has also persuaded landlords to allow local tourist attractions to take over an empty shop window display to advertise and promote their attraction. This idea could usefully be taken up by many towns where there are empty shops; it gives publicity for the tourist attraction and makes the town centre look less like a mouth with teeth missing. What is more, this use does not mean that business rates have to be levied, as it is not a 'beneficial use'.

wealth and employment in rural areas through networking with other agencies on a County wide basis

- to involve the extreme peripheral area of West Cornwall and Isles of Scilly in a European network and market through the exchange of ideas and good practice.

Although at the tip of Britain, as a peripheral and maritime County Cornwall is widely recognised as progressive and proactive in attracting European funds to help in creating a sustainable rural economy. The LEADER project is the sort of project which is music to Liberal Democrat ears with its concentration on community involvement, sustainability and partnership.

At Your Leisure

When the Liberal Democrats took control of the then Yeovil District Council, after years of Tory neglect. One particular area which had very little spent on it was leisure and recreation.

The Liberal Democrats created a thriving Leisure Unit which is responsible for many recreational facilities from parks to the leisure pool with fitness suite. The Council has its own very popular Octagon Theatre which hosts many touring plays and concerts and they regularly attract the Royal Shakespeare Company to nearby Stoke sub Hamdon for memorable performances. The Council's Museum of South Somerset is also a popular attraction as are the Yeovil Athletics Track and the numerous activity and sports coaching schemes organised by the Council every year.

The now renamed South Somerset Council introduced a Passport to Leisure scheme, which offers large discounts to local residents who receive benefits, are senior citizens, non-earning dependants of people on benefit, YT or full-time students; disabled people's helpers are also admitted free of charge.

South Somerset has broken out of the traditional council provided leisure facilities and is very involved in community development - in pump priming local organisations and starting new ventures like the regular tea dances for pensioners and the play bus for the young, both of which have proved a great hit around the District.

Simply the Best!

Over the past two years ALDC Council Support Officer, Jackie Ballard, has made regular visits to Liberal Democrat groups in majority control of their council. She has travelled the length and breadth of Britain from North East Fife to the Isle of Wight.

Those of you who did not read Grapevine in the past may not be aware of what is happening in Liberal Democrat run local government. For this special first edition of Grassroots Campaigner we have picked out some of the high-

There's

**Says ALDC Council support
Officer Jackie Ballard**

Jackie Ballard has recently returned from a trip to Slovakia where she took part in a conference on local government in Europe. The Editor submitted her to a gruelling inquisition to find out whether she learned anything worthwhile, while he was manning the fort at the Birchcliffe Centre.

Ed: What were you doing in Slovakia? Shouldn't you be working hard for ALDC or as Taunton PPC instead of swanning off to foreign parts?

JB: Sometimes learning about experiences in other democracies helps you to put your own into better perspective; the trip was paid for by a charitable foundation (not the Liberal Democrats!) and the boss said I could go - not that I'm being defensive or anything.

Ed: So what did you learn?

JB: The conference took place over two days and there were a number of international speakers (including me!) as well as many Mayors from Slovakia and Hungary.

The opening sessions were basically describing different forms of local government in Central and Western Europe - of course they have an advantage over us in that they have written constitutions and the role of local government is enshrined in the constitution.

The second session was a fascinating study, by Professor Manuel Morena, of the degrees to which different European countries had implemented the Charter for local self government; with a detailed description

lights of Jackie's visits to remind old readers of the good things going on around the country and to introduce new readers to our regular feature **FOCUS ON GROUPS IN CONTROL**.

If your group would like to feature in the centre pages of a future edition please write, phone, fax, or email Jackie Ballard (see details on page 12/13) and she will focus on you!

more than one way to do it!

of the Spanish quasi federal system of government. The implementation of the charter is not all a story of success e.g. the French government has dissolved 45 Town Councils in the past three years. However, Britain has not even signed the Charter (NB Has your council discussed a motion on the Charter, it was opened 10 years ago in Strasbourg).

Ed: Was the conference full of dreary speeches or did you have debate and discussion?

JB: There were a couple of sessions about local government in Hungary and Slovakia, which generated a lot of debate amongst delegates - especially between Slovakian mayors and the one MP present. The key problem being unwillingness of central government to decentralise power and to fund local government adequately - *now where have we heard that before?*

James Fearn from the Institute for local Government and Public Service gave an American's perspective on local government in Central Europe. His talk expanded on the problem of what he called 'unfunded mandates' - where central government gives duties and responsibilities to local government without the finance to carry them out. He also highlighted the USA experience where local government was established before the States and local councils chose to hand power up, rather than in Europe where power is having to be wrested down from national government.

The sessions on the final day concentrated on regionalism and regional development with contributions from the Ukraine as well as Slovakia. There was much debate about territorial divisions, functions and financing of regions - this is very much a live issue in Slovakia at the moment with different local government representatives putting forward conflicting proposals for regional government. The MP from the Ukraine was adamant that regionalism should start with bottom-up cooperation and partnership between the municipalities.

The Professor from Spain gave an insight into the autonomy of Spanish regions and said that some of them had their own historic and cultural identity while others were artificial creations. In Spain the state cannot impose budget discipline on regions and Catalonia has even been able to declare Catalan the official regional language so that Spanish speaking children are not taught their own language in schools; he thought the pendulum may have swung too far in favour of decentralisation in Spain.

Ed: It doesn't sound like you had to do much at this conference, if I may say so.

JB: I was too modest to mention my own presentation which was about citizen participation in UK local government - an unashamed plug for the 'Beyond Public Question Time' publication available from ALDC at £4.50. I talked about surveys, budget consultation, user panels, area committees etc. and mentioned Somerset (of course), Sutton (of course), not Oldham, but many other Liberal Democrat councils and the work they are doing to encourage the public to take part in the democratic process.

Ed: I bet there was lots of drinking and eating as well as hitting the nights spots of Bratislava.

JB: As with all conferences, I learned as much from the informal discussions outside the conference hall, as inside. Bratislava is not a very pretty place, although as it was shrouded in fog all the time I was there it was difficult to tell, but the prices were very cheap and the local hooch was pretty strong.

Ed: So to sum up, was it worth going?

JB: It certainly was - I was tempted not to come back! The themes of regionalism, local authority functions and financing seem to be the same across Europe with some countries finding better solutions to the power struggle than others. They may have a long way to go in Slovakia to establish local democracy, but we in Britain cannot be complacent either.

Goodbye Gobbledegook

The Plain English Campaign's excellent "A to Z Guide" is just what you need to explain to officers that their 19 page reports doesn't *have* to be unreadable. It is also just what your best friend needs to point out to you gently that you become pompous, long-winded, and incomprehensible whenever you go on about your Council work.

The underlying problem goes back to the Middle Ages, when Clerks were rare, and charged you by the word for writing your letter. By 200 years ago more people could write, so the skill was to use long words. Specialist language is still used to establish status over the listener or reader, with the added twist of acronyms like SSA, DoE and ALDC.

All of this is a trend Liberal Democrats should resist. Don't let excitement at your new-found respectability go to your head and turn you into a gobbledegook addict. You should always be writing (and speaking) with the aim of communicating clearly. We have sometimes seen whole chunks of council reports put in as stories in Focus. This booklet will help you see why that isn't a good idea, either. It has lots of practical alternative ('other') words to the bureaucrat's favourites, designed to simplify your sentences, and make them more advantageous ('helpful').

The Guide costs £3, and includes 12 pages of offi-

cial nonsense words, with matching English equivalents, as well as the list of words and phrases to avoid altogether that we have reproduced.

The Campaign's bread and butter is in doing contract work for public and private sector clients translating their forms and letters into English. They would be delighted to talk to your council about its information needs.

Grassroots Campaigner would also like to hear of anyone who has employed them, with some sample before and after paperwork.

*The A to Z Guide (£3) is published by the
Plain English Campaign,
PO Box 3,
New Mills,
Stockport SK12 4QP
(Tel 01663 744409; fax 01663 747038)*

Have You Missed The Deadline for Election Money ?

Areas which have elections next May all had full notification of the Party's support operation sent to them in October. It looks as though not everyone will have returned the information requested by the deadline of December 31st. Those who don't

hit that deadline are ruling themselves out of getting direct support that could be vital to success.

If this is you, for goodness sake get your act together! Contact Adam Boyer or Andrew Stunell at Hebden Bridge if you are in any doubt.



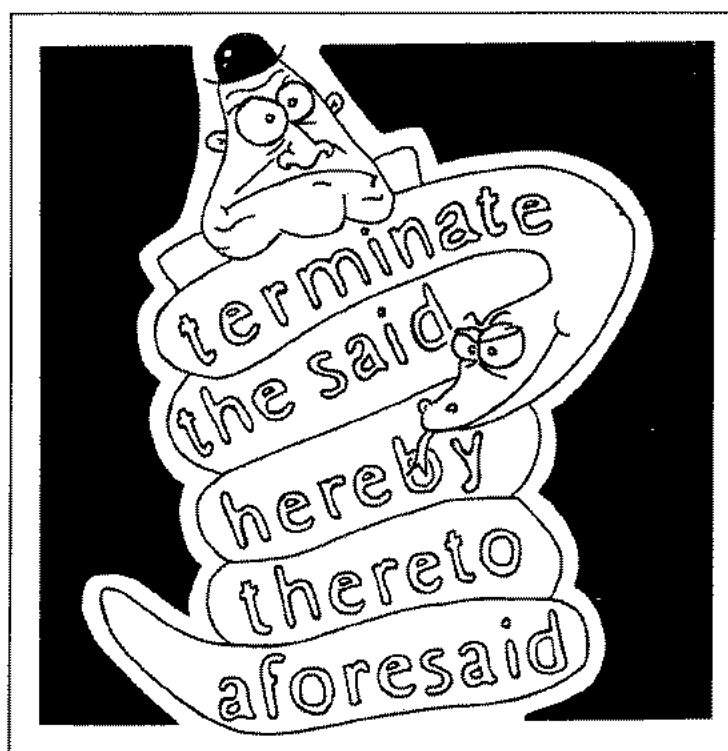
Words and phrases to avoid

The words and phrases below often crop up in letters and reports. Often you can remove them from a sentence without changing the meaning or the tone. In other words, they add nothing to the message. Try leaving them out of your writing. You'll find your sentences survive and succeed without them.

- a total of
- absolutely
- abundantly
- actually
- all things being equal
- as a matter of fact
- as far as I am concerned
- at the end of the day
- at this moment in time
- basically
- current
- currently
- during the period from
- each and every one
- existing
- extremely
- I am of the opinion that
- I would like to say
- I would like to take this opportunity to
- in due course
- in other words
- in the end
- in the final analysis
- in this connection
- in total
- in view of the fact that
- it should be understood
- last but not least
- obviously
- of course
- other things being equal
- quite
- really
- really quite
- regarding the (noun), it was
- the fact of the matter is
- the month(s) of
- to all intents and purposes
- to one's own mind
- very

ultimately	.....	U	.....	in the end, finally
unavailability	.....		.....	lack of
undersigned	.....		.....	I, we
undertake	.....		.....	agree, promise, do
uniform	.....		.....	the following
unilateral	.....		.....	same, similar
unoccupied	.....		.....	one-sided, one-way
until such time	.....		.....	empty
utilisation	.....		.....	until
utilise	.....		.....	use


Plain English Campaign's **A-Z GUIDE** of alternative words



Chard Town Council - Market Survey

In the final edition of Town & Parish News we carried a story about the Chard Liberal Democrats Manifesto, with its unique linking of residents' views and Lib Dem commitments. Their manifesto leaflet before the May elections not only presented the action points, it also gave details of the public response to the proposed action. In the election they won every seat they contested, 12 out of 15, leaving three others 'to provide an opposition'.

Now Cllr Tony Prior has followed up with the latest information on their recent Market Survey, put out as part of their A3 November Focus. Some local traders wanted to quash the market, so the Liberal Democrats ran a survey of public opinion.



the Town Council...
ply: 95% YES
we repair va...
we plan...

83% YES
YES
know that green space and
th you. So we will continue
rect play
he good work!

We have had a policy of giving
cash grants to cultural, sporting
and voluntary groups in Chard.
This helps them make Chard a
better town to live in with a range
of activities and resources.
We asked your views.
You replied:
The Town Council should give
grants: 95 %
£8000 is too little 11 %
too much 4 %
about right 69 %

**AL DEMOCRAT
OCUS TEAM**

**You also said
MORE POWERS
TO CHARD?**

88 % of you said the Town
Council should take on
responsibilities from the
County and District councils.
**Elect us again, and
we will do it!**

see this -
If you would li'
the editor or c

CHARD'S C
Chard is divid
and 3 town cc
the whole of
All principal
the 15 Towr

Extract from
the final edition
of TPN

Congratulations!

Paul Burstow, ALDC's Campaigns Officer, and Mary Kemm, his fellow ward councillor in Sutton, were married on Saturday November 11th at St Nicholas Church in Sutton. Paul's colleagues, and Standing Committee, wish them both every happiness in the years ahead. Here our reporter brings you a glimpse of Sutton's No 1 Society Wedding of 1995.

"When the best man is Lord Tope, the guests include the Council's Chief Executive, and one of the cards read out at the reception is from the Labour Group you know it's top hats and tails all round. But when there are three typos in the Order of Service, and the rockets (!!) launched after the ceremony from the church steps accidentally shoot down a pigeon minding its own business in a nearby tree, you know that ALDC can reach the parts other agents of chaos cannot reach. Paul's experience in organising conference fringe meetings came in handy, too, when both the lesson-readers found they'd been asked to read the same passage. No change there, then.

Over 150 of Sutton's best, and a good sprinkling of Liberal Democrat worthies from elsewhere, plus relations of all sizes crowded into the Borough's civic church for the wedding, which was conducted by the bride's father, Rev Bill Kemm. Afterwards there was champagne and wedding cake served in the pews. The Political Secretary was observed to swig a naughty glass of orange. The photographer (Lib Dem, of course) took enough photos to fill several constituency-wide tabloids. Balloons cascaded from the balcony, and the fireworks shot down the pigeons (OK, only one).



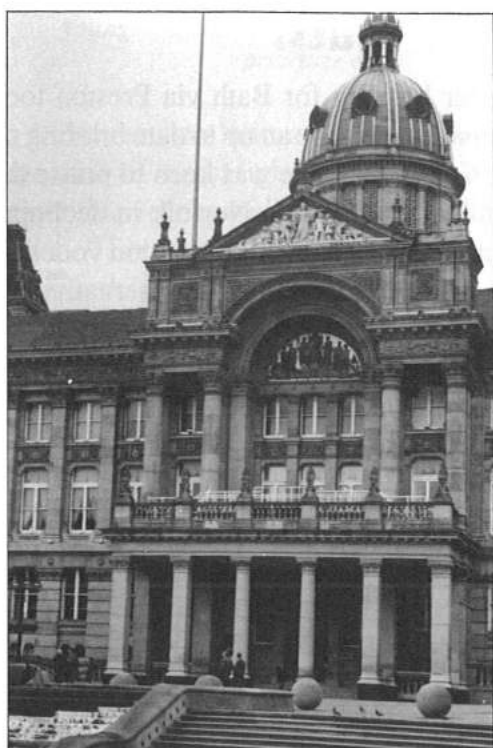
*Mary
and Paul
Burstow*

The celebrations spread through the Borough with a reception at Nonsuch House (originally the scene of much Elizabethan hey-nonny-no), where the commendably brief speeches did not spoil the excellent meal. The highland piper was a nice touch.

The hardy were invited to a bottle party in the evening, but your reporter, having had one glass of orange too much, opted out. A great day. A wedding to remember. Yes, it even started with a two minute silence."

We hope Paul and Mary have as much fun as our reporter did! He swears absolutely nothing has been exaggerated, not even a little bit.

Regenerated and Renewed



Birmingham's impressive Council House

After 21 years he seems to have it about right

Graham Tope (With 21 years under his belt he is well on his way to being the longest serving Group Leader - Unless somebody out there knows different? - Ed.) joined forces with Chris Willmore (Who has led groups on four different Councils. Another record? - Ed.) and Alexis Cassin to lead one of the most popular sessions of the day on "How to maintain a cohesive group". The importance of creating a constructive family atmosphere was echoed by all three speakers. The appointment of a Group Chair with a "personnel management" function and without a role in terms of politi-

The Birmingham Town Hall steeped in history, again played host to the November Councillor's Conference. Despite being only one day the team managed to cram into a full programme 9 workshops on topics ranging from Local Agenda 21 to opening up Black Holes by way of "maintaining cohesive groups".

The day started with Andrew Stunell organising group chants of "Tax Cuts mean School Cuts" by way of an impromptu briefing on the Budget. Ken Clarke's Budget and the Local Government financial settlement have since proved him right. Having sorted out the FOCUS headlines for the next few weeks the conference scene was set by Richard Kemp (Liverpool), Mark Cox (Oadby & Wigston) and Margaret Ann de Courcey Bayley (Harrogate) detailing some of the different facets of campaigning in a diverse range of settings from inner city to rolling rural countryside.



Graham Rix masterminds the stall, which saw brisk trade especially on the new ALDC publication 'Beyond Public Question Time'

cal leadership was also identified as a key component of cohesion.

The Party's major autumn campaign on health utilises many of the techniques developed by Chris Renard out on the Parliamentary by-election trail. Specialist surveys to doctors and dentists (and in other fields to head teachers, commuters or small businesses)



David Rendel speaks out while Jackie Ballard and Sarah Boad (ALDC Vice Chair) look on with interest

generate those killer facts which can so devastate the opposition and give you front page headlines.

The discovery that 70% of GPs in Hazel Grove were thinking of taking early retirement and that a further 15% were considering a career change undermines Government claims that NHS reforms are working. And it gets you on the front page of the local paper. And if that doesn't work you can always stick it on the front of your own leaflets.

On the Fringes

The significance of 5036 Councillors, has not been lost on the pressure groups, lobby firms and specialist groups. Both LGIU and ADLO had stalls and TESCO were happy to sponsor lunch, and not a "out of town superstore" planning application in sight.

With Tony Greaves, Liberal Democrat Publications, PCA and a Local Agenda 21 display from Mendip the fringe is beginning to take on a life of its own.

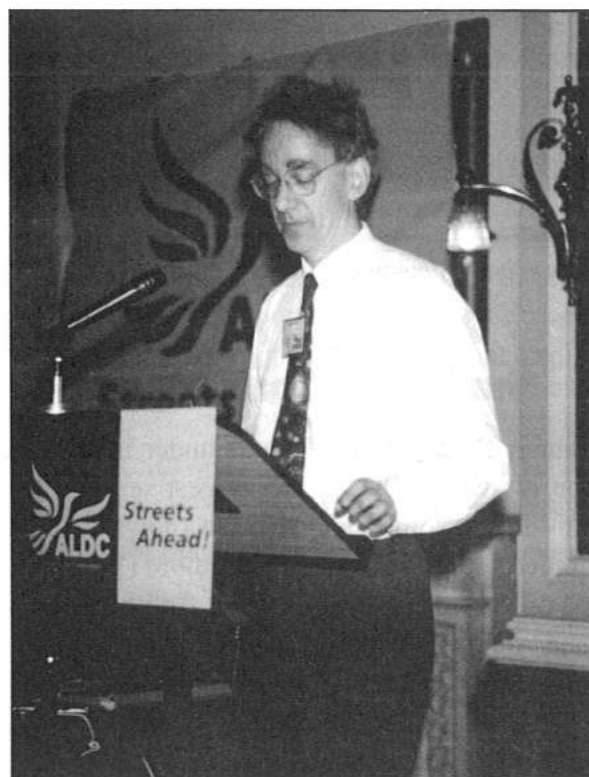
Gloria Cawood (Mendip) and Hilary Wade combined to give a polished presentation on the initiatives currently being pursued locally on Agenda 21. As more and more councils get to grip with Agenda 21 the range of good ideas and best practice is growing steadily.

Beyond Public Question Time

Birmingham also saw the launch of ALDC's latest best seller - "Beyond Public Question Time" Written by Jackie Ballard it pulls together all the latest ideas about empowering local people, encouraging participation and consulting on the issues. Keep your opponents squirming as you steadily open up your council (a bargain at £4.50 + postage and packing).

"Tax cuts mean school cuts!"

Don Foster heading for Bath via Preston took time out to give conference an up to date briefing on the education campaign. He was keen to praise the stance taken by our group on Norfolk in declining the opportunity to pilot Nursery education vouchers there. Regrettably the Labour and Conservative old pals act combined to sell the counties 3 & 4 year olds short. More alarmingly he highlighted how this years local government settlement is likely to simply compound the problems caused by last years tight lim-



ALDC boss Andrew Stunell prepares the collected masses for another chant of: 'Tax cuts mean School cuts'



Rejuvenated and relaxed - the Conference's youngest delegate - Natasha Watson makes her priorities clear

its. More teachers redundancies seem likely and the impact on FE and Higher Education colleges will be greater this year as well. Don't let the Tories get away with it - "Tax cuts mean school cuts!"

As dusk fell over Birmingham and the 150 delegates packed their bags to go home it could still be faintly heard echoing around the banqueting suite "Tax cuts mean school cuts!"

Political Ban May Be Dropped

The ban on senior council officers serving on another council is being challenged at the European Commission of Human Rights (ECHR). The ban came in with the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act, and prevents officers above PO1, or more junior officers who give advice to Council Committees, from taking part in political activity.

As a result many councillors had to drop out when their terms of office expired. Now Unison has successfully claimed that the 30,000 people affected have a good case to put to the ECHR. The same group are also barred from standing at European or Parliamentary elections, or from giving any public expression to a party political view.

The case is not likely to be heard for some time, and it could be that a change in government will come sooner than a verdict! However ALDC, which gave evidence against the ban, strongly supports the Unison move,

and we will bring you reports on progress in future editions. If you or a known local supporter are affected by this ruling we would particularly like to hear from you.

Many valued Liberal Democrat councillors were affected by the ban, whilst other good candidates have had to drop out on promotion. It has been ruled that standing as a nonparty candidate at a parish election is not ruled out by the ban, and so in some places you can find senior staff serving on another local council.

Beyond Public Question Time

**- the latest publication from ALDC -
NOW AVAILABLE Price £4.50**

ALDC receives many phone calls from people wanting model standing orders or motions to introduce public question time or wanting to know about setting up a youth council or area committees.

This new publication includes copies of actual standing orders from Liberal Democrat councils; it includes a youth council constitution, details of delegation to area committees and much, much more.

If your council is stuck at public question time (or maybe hasn't even got that far) and you want to move it on to other ways of involving the public in the decision making, this is the booklet for you.

In four sections, it covers ways in which the public can influence council decisions, be consulted, be involved and be empowered. Some of the ideas are cheap to do, simple to set up and may even be supported by other parties on the Council; others will require more commitment and determination. Jackie Ballard's booklet includes examples from around the country where councils have been successful in raising the level of interest and participation in the democratic process.

**BUY IT NOW, IF YOU WANT TO JOURNEY
BEYOND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME.**

Letter to Santa

My House
Survey Street
Focusville

December 1995

Dear Santa

Some of my friends say you don't exist, but I think you do. Please prove me right by sending me the following for Christmas. If you do, I promise to be really good next year and do everything that nice Mr. Stunell at ALDC tells me to do; including more residents' surveys, Focus deliveries and put down at least one motion at every council meeting.

To make your life easier I have divided my list into high, medium and low priorities (as suggested by Paul Burstow):

High priority:

- 1) Every house in my Focus round to be given a letter box of standard size at chest level, and no loose dogs in the hallway.
- 2) The ability to speed read and remember all the council agendas and really useful ALDC mailings which I receive.
- 3) A truss for my postman.
- 4) Please give Mrs. Mona Lot of 21 Pothole Avenue everything she has asked for on the last 6 grumble sheets - so that I can have a rest.

Medium priority:

- 1) A phone which develops a fault when the group leader tries to call to tell me the group line on something I don't agree with.
- 2) A volume control for my teenager which will automatically reduce the sound of her/his music and her/his voice (especially when she/he complains she/he hasn't seen me for a month).
- 3) A time management course which I will remember and obey for more than a week.

Low priority

- 1) An inflatable doll to keep my partner company so that my absence won't be noticed so much.
- 2) A lawn which mows itself and a self-weeding garden.
- 3) A self-cleaning house; and lastly a self-feeding cat (perhaps that should be a high priority).

Thank you for reading this far, Santa, I'm sure you won't let me down.

Yours liberally

An extremely tired activist (who intends to have time off over Christmas because 1996 will be the really BIG ONE).

Paperless Candidates Who Needs Them?

Andy Myles, Chief Executive of the Scottish Liberal Democrats has produced a very good paper that spells out the case for paperless candidates. ALDC reproduce an amended version of it for the benefit of readers in England and Wales

What are Paperless Candidates?

The consistent advice of ALDC over the years has been to:

- Target specific wards to win;
- Canvass new members using the canvass returns; and then
- Develop the Local Party - hopefully increasing the number of target wards.

In non-target wards our strategic aim is to put up as many "paperless candidates" as possible.

Paperless Candidates are candidates put up for local government elections, but which have no campaign. No "paper" - no leaflets, posters, or canvass cards - is put out in their support. The only "paper" involved comprises the nomination papers and the ballot paper. All of the paper put out by the Party should be in target seats.

The Arguments For

There has been some debate about the desirability of paperless candidates - but the following arguments have won the day inside the Party.

Voter Choice: Maximising the number of candidates gives the maximum number of voters the chance to vote for the Party. There are people who will always vote Liberal Democrat - and so should be given the opportunity to do so.

Numbers: The media - and therefore the public - place great importance at the outset of a campaign on the number of candidates each party fields - both at local and national levels. The more candidates we field, the more relevant we will be seen to be by the media.

Votes: At the end of a campaign each party's share of the vote is seen by the media - and the public - as an indication of their success. If we don't put up the candidates our share of the vote is bound to be depressed. No candidate equals no votes.

New Targets: By seeing how many votes we get with virtually no effort we can identify areas which are potential new targets.

The Arguments Against

Voter Impression: Some say that they want to see leaflets from the parties, and have the candidate(s) call at their door. Don't overestimate the numbers of such voters. They are often a very small but vocal minority. They often wouldn't vote for us in any case - whether they get a leaflet or not.

The Candidate's Image: Some say that prominent local people can do themselves - and the Party - harm by standing and doing no work in the ward. This may be true. However, using people prominent in the local community such as the local GP might be worth considering. But make sure that they have been subject to the same approval process as everyone else, just in case.

Results: It is said that poor results in some wards can do the Party harm. The fact is that if we have been strictly targeting our resources, our successes will more than counter balance any poor results. Wards gained are much better stories for the media. They will concentrate on the wards we win - not on the wards we don't.

Paperless Candidates - The Do's

Selection: As early as possible you should try to get as many members as possible to agree to have their name put forward as paperless candidates. When you explain the arguments for having these candidates most members will agree. You should also explain that their efforts during the campaign will still be directed towards the target wards. Always check that the candidates are valid - that they live or work in the Council area, and are over 21 on nomination day, etc.,

Nomination Papers: It is vital that you get the nomination papers from the Council as early as possible - and that your campaign organiser has everything ready for the completion of the papers.

Finding the Signatures: Start off by finding as many members, friends or colleagues as you can who are on the electoral register in the ward - and approach them to sign the nomination first.

If there are not enough of these, the next step is to find the area of the ward which you think is most likely to contain sympathetic voters.

- Start knocking on doors - always checking names against the Electoral Register;
- Politely ask if the voter would object to a Liberal Democrat standing in the ward;
- If they have no objection explain to them that, unfortunately, we have very few members in the ward;

- Ask them if they would be prepared to sign the papers for our prospective candidate;
- Explain that their signatures will not appear in the local press;
- Explain that they are not committing themselves to voting for the Party; and
- Thank them for their assistance - regardless of whether they sign or not.

You will be surprised how easy and quick it is to get the required 10 signatures.

Lodging the Papers: Lodge the papers with the Returning Officer at the earliest date possible. This will help to prevent any last minute panic if one of the signatures is in any way faulty.

The Local Press: Your local papers may run lists of candidates with photos and brief comments from the candidates. If this is so, make sure that you have good photos of the candidates at an early stage, and use the comments space to make the various points that are the centrepiece of your campaign locally. This is good free publicity.

Lodging Election Returns: Always remember to get the election returns in on time. You can show a minimal expenditure return for each paperless candidate.

Paperless Candidates - The Don'ts

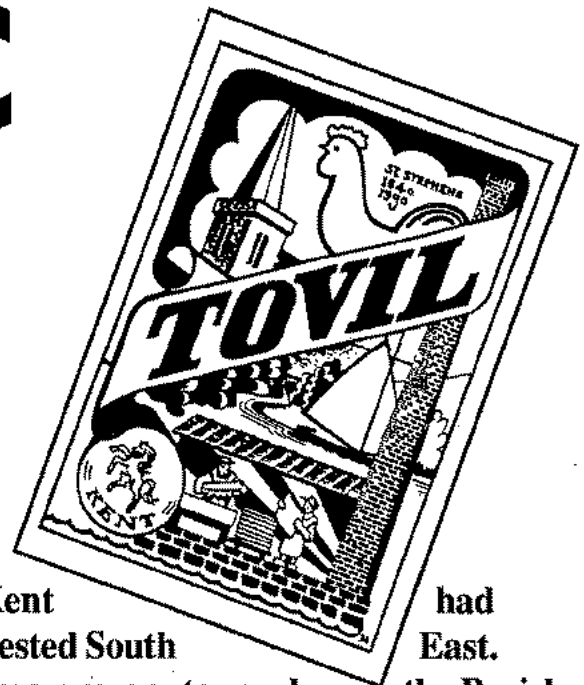
Candidates: This is a problem, or illness, experienced by most candidates. They want to fight in the ward where their name is on the ballot paper. Be strict - don't let them catch or pass on the infection. You must not change your strategy. Remember that a win in your target wards is better for the cause than a handful of extra votes gathered across the district.

The Press: Try to make sure that any free publicity in the local press for paperless candidates is used. Don't miss deadlines or a good opportunity is wasted.

The Official Bits: You have to treat the Nomination Papers and lodging election returns seriously. Don't think that they are unimportant. They are the one thing that must be got right for a paperless candidate to have the full effect.

Tovil PC Plans Ahead

Tovil Parish Council, in Maidstone District, in Kent
many of the problems of rural fringe areas in the congested South
Development issues and environmental pres-
felt that there was a need to go



had
East.

sures are acute, and the Parish
beyond the Local Plan and Structure
Plan levels.

The solution has been to draw up their
own "Parish Plan". Our thanks to Chair-
man Cllr Clive English for sending us a copy
of the Plan. He writes:

"We are a mixed urban and rural parish
which is in the throws of change from a farm-
ing/industrial area to one with a rapidly in-
creasing residential population. This has
caused many problems which we have de-
cided to address in what we believe to be
the most coordinated way.

"It is fair to say that the Borough Coun-
cil and the local media have been quite
favourably impressed, and we believe that
the Plan will be a very useful document
in promoting our local parishes."

Fifteen pages long, with a map at-
tached, the document is substantial with
sections on Housing, Infrastructure,
Public Utilities, Industry and Employ-
ment, Landfill Sites and Waste Man-
agement, and on the Environment. It
was formally adopted by the Parish
Council on 5th July this year.

page 1.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Need for a Tovil Local Plan
 - 1.1 Tovil Parish Council authorised the preparation of a local plan because of problems affecting the area and the pressures for changes in land use.
 - 1.2 Major issues are:
 - Failures of the infrastructure to support existing industry.
 - The current designations for land use in the Borough Local Plan giving the potential for even greater industrial use.
 - Lack of recreational facilities within the Parish for a growing population.
 - The large percentage of high density, small housing units which creates:
 - a need for a more balanced, stable and coherent population which is in a secure, well-served and varied environment.
 - The misinformed wider public perception of Tovil as "the tip"; as an area of high crime; as being undesirable.
 - 1.3 One of the main aims of both the Kent Structure Plan and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan is the enhancement of the rural and urban environment. If Tovil is to benefit from this enhancement, it is clear that matters of local importance need to be brought to the attention of planners and decision makers at all levels. This plan aims to fulfil that function.
 - 1.4 The Plan must be in accordance with the strategy of both the Kent Structure Plan and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan; however, it may propose modifications to both of these strategic documents in the light of changed circumstances or in the interests of improvement to 'quality of life' issues in the Parish area.
 - 1.5 This Plan will be used as the detailed basis for Parish Council considerations with regard to future developments and land use. It looks to provide better housing provision, community services, shopping facilities and recreational opportunities. It also aims to assist with 'image': to help promote a community spirit and a pride in the Parish area.

An extract from
the Tovil Parish
Plan

News from Birchcliffe

Getting Ready for the General Election

ALDC, as a major resource within the Party (as we management-speak people say), is busy preparing itself for the General Election. We have a network of contacts that reaches into just about every target seat and active local party, as well as into every Council Group. We also have several senior staff who are themselves committed to Target Seat campaigns.

In addition, a lot of our 'core tasks', such as advising people on how to win elections, are quite relevant to having a successful General Election!! And just to add an extra ingredient compared to the 1992 General Election, the Party now has an extra 1,200 councillors, and has doubled its number of majority groups. ALDC itself has an extra 600 members. So the demands on the organisation to service and support you all are getting larger.

ALDC's Officers and Standing Committee met in November to begin to plan how we could make the most effective inputs to the national campaign, both before and during the campaign itself. One thing that was very clear was that the Association has a very important core task to do on behalf of the Party that must take precedence over anything else, and that is securing a good set of local election results in May. That is closely followed by the need to support our Council Groups in the coming very difficult Budget round, and in their work projecting Liberal Democracy in their areas during 1996.

Another thing that was clear was that more thinking and preparations were needed, and you can expect to see the results of further developments in the New Year.

A Budget for Growth, A Budget for Real

Arnie Gibbons, ALDC's Treasurer, had a less glamorous job than Kenneth Clarke, but arguably a harder one, when he drew up the ALDC Budget for 1996.

Now approved by Standing Committee it comes to terms with a very tough financial climate.

It preserves ALDC's services. Nearly. At present it only pays for our Volunteer Coordinator until midyear, but there is a commitment to a further financial review next March with the aim of keeping this post. There are tough targets for membership, for publications sales, and for conference income....

Like Kenneth Clarke, we hope it will prove an election winner, but there is a lot of hard work to be done first.

Put These Dates In Your Diary Now!

ALDC's Conferences in 1996 are already promising to be something special. Get the dates in your diary, and have something to really look forward to next year.

ALDC's Summer Conference and AGM is on the weekend of June 22nd and 23rd, at Manchester University. **It could be the last party event before the General.** The Party and ALDC are looking at ways of making this the biggest political event post-May. So don't miss it.

Our Autumn Conference is in ever-popular Leamington Spa on November 23rd. Who knows it could be the first post-General Election report back of the Balance of Power parliamentary party. Come and take part in the consultation on the wording of the question in the Referendum on Voting Reform..... Well, anyway, just put the date in your diary.

It's All Silver and Gold: New Subscription Rates from January

As agreed at the AGM last June the new ALDC subscription rates come into force this January. Gold and Charter Members have no extra money to pay, but there are changes for Councillor, Campaigner, and Parish Members. Those who are on Standing Order pay-

ments will already have had reminders asking them to send us a new bank mandate. **OUR THANKS TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF MEMBERS WHO HAVE DONE SO.**

Other members who pay by cheque, credit card, or cash have recently had notification of the amount, and we look forward to hearing from you shortly!

You are getting a better service for your increased subscription. Grassroots Campaigner (of which this is the pilot edition) has everything in it that used to appear not only in Campaigner and Grapevine, but also in Town & Parish News. Previously you will only have got one of these, depending on your membership category.

We think you will be getting even better value for money than before, and we very much hope you will agree. The much simpler membership structure will also make it easier for us to develop and maintain our

services to you at a high level in future years.

● If you have any queries about your membership payments you can contact Ted Parkinson or David Ball at the Birchcliffe Centre.

New Information Officer

Adam Boyer is our new Information Officer. He has a distinguished pedigree, which includes two previous stints with ALDC, literature production in many campaigns around the country, and more recently being Liz Lynne's Agent in Rochdale, scene of many tough political contests and battles (mostly with the Labour Party!).

He now gets to manage the biggest collection of Focuses in the country, and 36 filing cabinets full of.... well that's part of the interest, as no-one really knows what those cabinets *do* have in them.

News from around the councils

West Sussex County Council, in partnership with the RNID, has launched a pioneering new service for the county's deaf and hard of hearing population. The West Sussex Communication Support Unit provides deaf people with access to information and services, including job interviews, training, education, hospital appointments and social occasions. It provides sign language interpreters, speech to text transcription and advice on communication. The RNID estimates that one in six people are affected by some degree of hearing loss.

Torbay Borough Council has launched a pioneering recycling scheme aimed at visitors to holiday centres in the Torbay area. It is the first such scheme in the UK and amongst the first in Europe. Visitors to three holiday centres in the District will be able to recycle all their newspapers, magazines, cans and glass bottles at several specific points around each site. On arrival at the holiday centres visitors will be given bags to collect their recyclables and supporting literature telling them about the scheme. The scheme will initially run for two years and is funded through the EU Life Fund and the Joint Recycling Committee.

Somerset County Council have sent out ten thousand questionnaires to a random selection of households, asking for their views on protecting the

environment. The Council has set up a special unit called Sustainable Somerset to work on their response to Agenda 21. The questionnaire has been prepared in conjunction with the 5 district councils in Somerset and within a month of it going out 3,000 responses had been received. The questions were grouped under headings of recycling and waste, food and shopping, transport, energy and health, leisure and the environment. The questionnaire will give a useful insight into how Somerset people think and is also an awareness raising exercise in its own right.

Pendle Borough Council Liberal Democrats have come up with an interesting way of 'spreading the load' among group members. They have appointed 'nominated members' for each Service Unit of the Council whose function is to maintain contact and liaison with the relevant Service Manager, to act as a means of communication between the Service Unit and the Group and to be available for consultation by the Service Manager. Other groups on the Council have been invited to appoint shadow nominated members.

Warwickshire County Council has changed its street lamps from 80w mercury bulbs to 70w high pressure sodium, which are cheaper and safer to dispose of. They have also changed to using recycled toner cartridges in laser printers.

News from the Unitaries

ALDC has recently had a report on the first six months of the shadow Unitary Authority of East Riding of Yorkshire from Group Leader Bob Tress. We reprint some of the highlights below:

'As there are only 22 weeks to go before vesting day this is probably the last chance I will have to find the time to write. You will be aware that there are 18 Liberal Democrats, 19 Tories, 23 Labour and 7 Independents on our Council.

Despite this.... We win all the votes at full Council; by getting support from the Tories mainly on structural issues and from Labour mainly on policy issues. There are many strands to our success. The first strand is down to ALDC and the booklet "Thriving in the Balance", which I insisted that all our serious candidates read. The result was that the whole group was fully behind a policy of using our third share in power to the best advantage of the Liberal Democrats and the people of East Riding. That meant no Council Leader, no Committee Chairs and no coalitions. My group is united, hard working and highly motivated. We are running the agenda.

Our group has fairly frequent group meetings which I supplement with Leader's Letters to keep everyone up to date with events.

We have now got in place our senior officers and are putting in place structures for second and third tier officers. We have already started the big jobs of property and accommodation and fleshing out plans for the services to be run jointly with the other unitary councils. We have opened up debate about area committees and area offices. The Council has three spokespersons for each committee, three leaders and rotating chairs at each meeting. Neighbouring councils can't believe it will work, but it does and it will.'

ALDC Note: We have been keeping contact with the other Shadow Unitaries where Liberal Democrats are in power and hope to be able to organise a teach-in of some sort early in 1996 for those of you who will be treading this path next year. Meanwhile it looks as though things are going well in the East Riding.

Warning:

The LGIU (Local Government Information Unit) has recently updated its booklet "Councillors, tax and benefits" which includes all the April 1995 changes in rules. Essential reading for all Councillors. This booklet could increase your spending power. **"Councillors, tax and benefits" £5.00 from LGIU, 1-5 Bath Street, London EC1V 9QQ - Tel. 0171-608 1051. Or better still get your council to buy you a copy!**

Merry Xmas and Season's Greetings to all our members



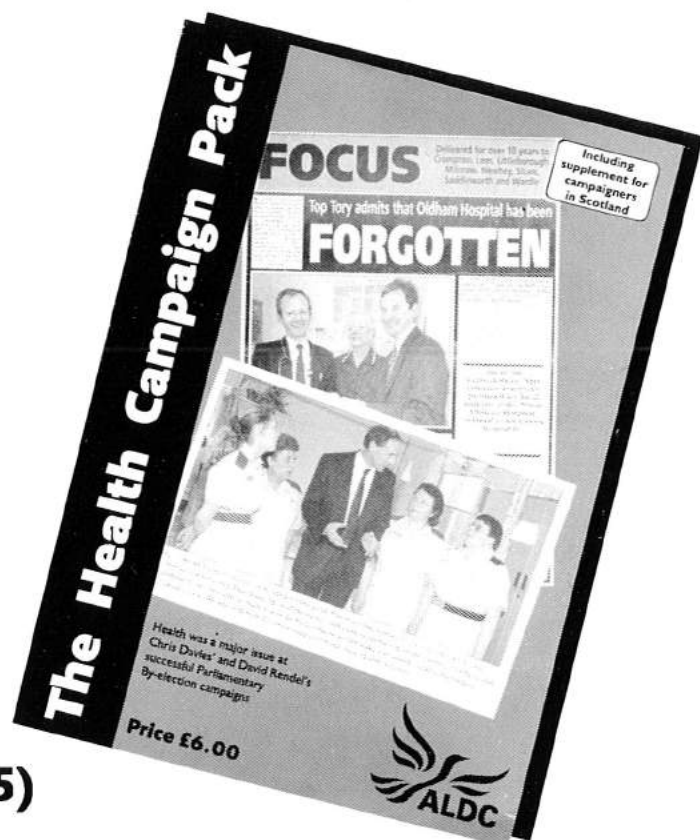
**Please do keep sending
your articles, press
releases, leaflets and
comments on Grassroots
Campaigner to ALDC**



**ALDC, The Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden
Bridge, West Yorks HX7 8DG.
Tel: 01422-843785, fax: 01422-843036, email:
aldc@cix.compulink.co.uk**

THE HEALTH CAMPAIGN PACK

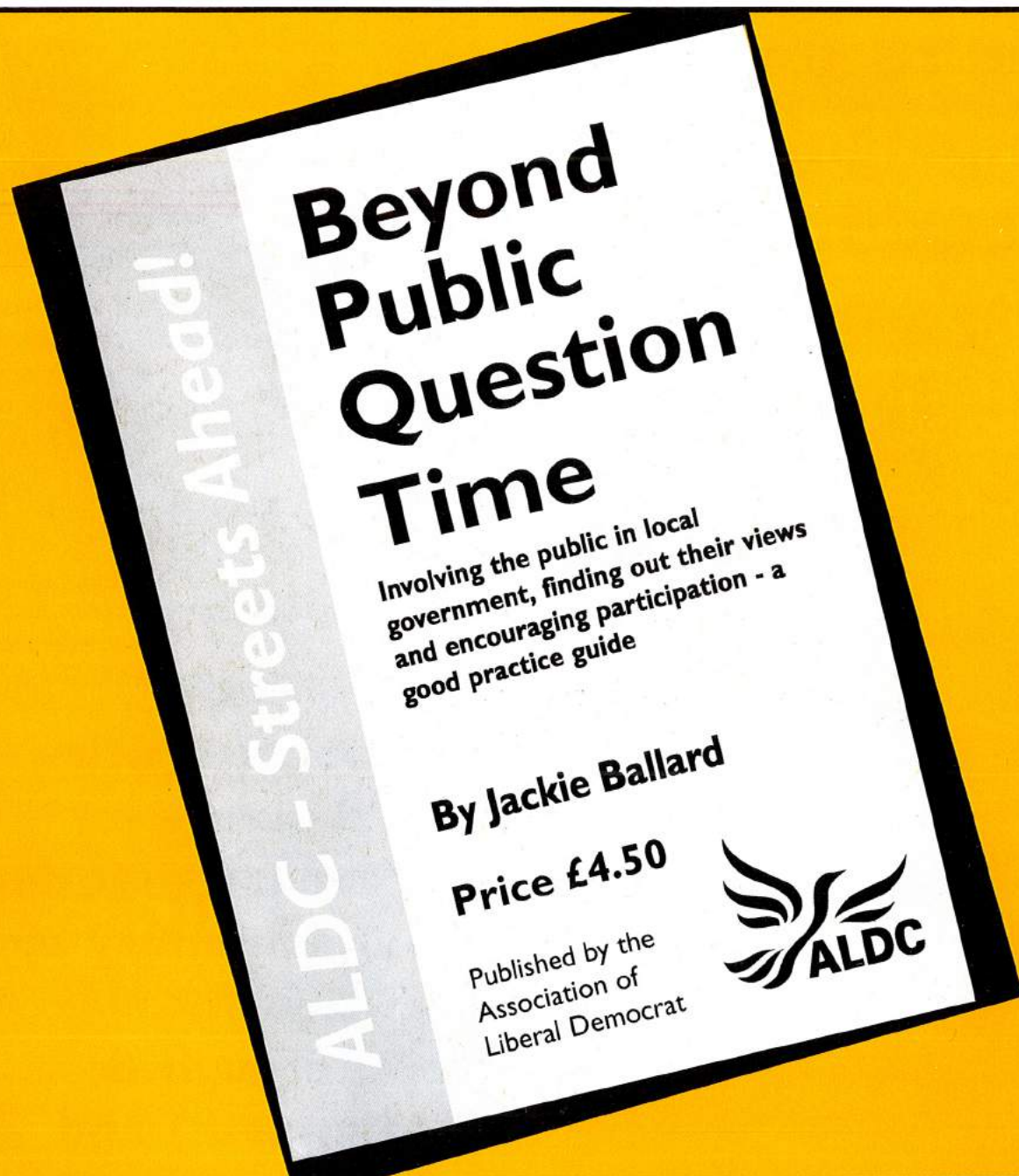
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